



University Health and Safety Policy



Foreword by the Vice-Chancellor and President

At the time of writing this policy the University community is facing one of the biggest Health and Safety challenges ever as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This will almost certainly affect the way we consider our environments both at home and at work for the foreseeable future. It also makes working together in respect of our health, safety and wellbeing even more important and one I am sure we are all committed to, in terms of protecting not just our university community but the wider community too.

Occupational health and safety is key to supporting the highest standards of research, student, colleague and visitor experience on and off our campuses. Health and safety is about much more than complying with the law. We have a strong moral obligation to set and take a leading role in achieving a positive health, safety and wellbeing culture. To achieve this, we need everyone's commitment and involvement.

Although the primary responsibility for implementing this policy rests with me, I regard the adequate control of risks to health and safety, as a fundamental part of everyone's role and an integral aspect of everything that we do. Excellence in research, teaching and the wider student experience requires excellent standards of health, safety and wellbeing.

The University will ensure the effective management of risks by setting, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the health and safety management system. The way that we do this is by implementing a plan, do, check, act approach. This approach is no different to management processes used across the University. Monitoring and review is undertaken at Unit, Faculty and University level. The University Health and Safety Committee meets regularly and includes trade union and lay membership to ensure good corporate governance.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that we do not put ourselves, or others at undue risk. It is particularly important that everyone with a management or supervisory role leads by example and makes sure that all those for whom they are responsible are properly aware of the University's health, safety and wellbeing policies, standards, guidance and arrangements.

I look forward to your co-operation and support in the successful implementation of the University Health and Safety Policy.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Day".

Date 23 February 2021

Professor Chris Day
Vice-Chancellor and President

1. Statement of Intent

1.1 University Council accepts ultimate responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing and for ensuring the highest levels of corporate governance are in place. The Vice-Chancellor and President (VC) has primary responsibility for the overall management of health, safety and wellbeing, including the statutory duties to ensure (as far as is reasonably practicable) the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees and students, and of other persons who may be affected by the University's undertakings. The VC and Council are committed to the highest standards of health and safety and the continued development of a positive health, safety and wellbeing culture.

1.2 This policy identifies responsibilities and arrangements for the effective management of health and safety in the University, the arrangements section is provided on the Occupational Health and Safety Service ([OHSS website](#)) and documented within the University Health and Safety Management Standards.

1.3 Faculties and Units have, where required, local health and safety policies and management arrangements specific to their operations. These documents should be read in conjunction with the University Health and Safety Policy, as this is the definitive policy position of the University. To achieve compliance with the University Health and Safety Policy the University will communicate this policy to all colleagues, students and others and as a minimum:

- Comply with all current health and safety legislative requirements and relevant approved codes of practice to maintain healthy and safe working conditions.
- Implement and adopt this policy and all associated management standards and guidance.
- Allocate sufficient resources and ensure access to competent health and safety advice is maintained.
- Provide suitable information, instruction, supervision and training for colleagues and students to ensure they are competent to carry out working activities.
- Communicate and consult with colleagues, students, trade unions and others with respect to their health, safety and welfare.
- Take all reasonable measures to prevent and learn from accidents and work related ill-health.
- Provide and maintain safe plant, equipment and systems of work.
- Ensure that the storage, handling and use of articles and substances are carried out in a manner which controls any health, safety and/or fire risks.

1.4 This statement is published for all colleagues and students on the OHSS website. Failure to comply with these requirements may lead to formal action in accordance with the [disciplinary](#) policy and/or potential legal action by the relevant enforcement authorities.

1.5 The University's collective aim is to provide a positive health, safety and wellbeing culture and a continuous, cost effective improvement in performance. All colleagues and students are required to play their part in making health, safety and wellbeing a top priority.

Signed



Chris Day Vice-Chancellor and President

Date: 23 February 2021

Signed



Paul Walker Chair of Council

Date: 23 February 2021

2. Organisational Responsibilities

2.1 The University Management Structure

For health, safety and wellbeing purposes, the two bodies which hold prime organisational responsibility are University Council (the statutory body and governing body of the University) and Executive Board (EB) (responsible for the day to day senior management decisions of the University). The VC is primarily accountable for all decisions. The specific posts involved and core responsibilities are detailed below. Please refer to [Appendix A](#) for the University Health and Safety Organogram.

The line management responsibility from colleagues to Head of Unit through to Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor (FPVC) will be provided in the respective Faculty Health and Safety Policies.

2.2 University Council

University Council carry ultimate responsibility for the health, safety and wellbeing of anyone who could be affected by University activities, both on and off University occupied premises. In order to fulfil its responsibilities Council will;

- Ensure the University has an appropriate health and safety management system, policy and statement of intent in place; which is regularly monitored and reviewed.
- Provide a mechanism by which colleagues are consulted on health, safety and wellbeing.
- Ensure the University Health and Safety Committee functions in accordance with legal requirements as set out in the terms of reference.
- Provide arrangements for recognised trade unions to appoint safety representatives and enable them to undertake their responsibilities including representation at University Health and Safety Committee.
- Receive regular reports from the University Health and Safety Committee.
- Receive notification of any incidents that present a significant risk to health and safety and any enforcement action taken against the University, including any response taken.

2.3 Vice-Chancellor and President

The primary responsibility and accountability for the health, safety and wellbeing in the University rests with University Council who have entrusted the overall management of health safety and wellbeing to the VC. It is the VC's legal duty to ensure, along with the University EB, the health, safety and wellbeing of all who work for or with the University. The VC is responsible for ensuring that sufficient resources are provided and there is effective planning and communication for health, safety and wellbeing. The VC has delegated management of health, safety and wellbeing, within Faculties and Professional Services to the FPVCs and Professional Service Budget Holders.

2.3.1 Executive Board

EB will monitor the delivery of the [University Health and Safety Strategic Plan](#). They will provide leadership and direction for health, safety and wellbeing issues, in particular championing subject specific topics identified in the plan. They will ensure these matters are effectively integrated into the day to day management of the University. EB will provide the VC and Council with assurance that health, safety and wellbeing is being appropriately managed.

2.4 Executive Board Member Responsible for Health and Safety

The Executive Board Member for Health and Safety at Newcastle University is the Executive Director of Human Resources. They will provide the executive lead for championing health and safety, communicate with the VC, EB and Council on health, safety and wellbeing matters

and hold an ex-officio seat on University Health and Safety Committee. They will also have final authority for the enforcement of health and safety where there is a need to compel actions. They will provide an assurance for Council that policy is being developed, health, safety and wellbeing matters are being adequately managed and that sufficient resource is deployed to monitor, investigate, audit and provide guidance on health, safety and wellbeing issues, at all levels within the University.

2.5 Faculty Pro Vice Chancellor and Professional Service Budget Holders

On a day to day basis the FPVCs and Professional Service Budget Holders ensure the compliance, implementation and monitoring of the University health and safety management system in line with policy, protocols and legislative requirements in their respective Faculty and Professional Services. The FPVCs and Professional Service Budget Holders will delegate their authority and actions to the Heads of Unit and relevant Faculty colleagues who have the necessary competence. In particular the FPVC and Professional Service Budget Holders will:

- Provide leadership and governance which supports and strengthens the University health, safety and wellbeing culture.
- Define a clear health and safety management structure to support the implementation of University Health and Safety Policy.
- Appoint and work in partnership with the Chair of Faculty Health and Safety Committee and OHSS.
- Ensure Heads of Units take responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing management.

2.6 Head of Unit

The Heads of Unit, including Directors of Institutes and Services, have personal responsibility for ensuring their Units are run in a healthy and safe manner. They hold day to day management responsibility for health, safety and wellbeing and must ensure that their Unit's activities are undertaken with due regard to the health, safety and wellbeing of all colleagues, students and visitors. In particular the Head or Director of Unit will:

- Ensure the implementation of health, safety and wellbeing policies and management standards.
- Appoint, in writing, suitable Unit/School Safety Officers (SSO) and other trained and competent persons, e.g. Biological Safety Supervisors (BSS), Radiation Protection Supervisors (RPS) and their Deputies, as necessary. Their role is to advise, monitor and plan for safe activities without undue risks to health, safety and wellbeing. This does not discharge the Directors of Institutes/Heads of Unit/Administration of their duties and if the role is not appointed it shall be held by the Head of Unit.
- Where Genetic Modification (GM) work is undertaken, the Head of Unit must arrange a suitable local GM Safety Committee and appoint, in writing, a GM Safety Chair. In the case of the School not undertaking any significant amount of GM work the Head of Unit may agree with another Head of Unit to 'contract out' their GM Safety Committee work to the other Unit within the University system. This will only be permitted with the approval of OHSS.
- Notify, in writing, of all such appointments to OHSS.
- Have regular meetings with their local safety team in order to discuss health, safety and wellbeing management within their units and provide sufficient resources.
- Ensure the Unit has a health and safety committee or other suitable forum, where health, safety and wellbeing is a standing agenda item.

2.7 Principal Investigators, Managers and Supervisors (PIMS)

The health and safety of individual research projects or specific working activities is the responsibility of the PIMS. They are responsible for the safe management of the project or activity, the people involved and their health and safety training. PIMS may not delegate this accountability and must ensure that appropriate planning for health, safety and wellbeing is made, policies are implemented and that all required documents and communications are

completed. In addition, PIMS not only have responsibility for their colleagues and students, but also for others who may be affected by the actions of their colleagues and students.

2.8 Colleagues and Students

All colleagues and students in any area of work have responsibility for ensuring that the University policies and legal requirements are fully complied with. Anybody who has any degree of control over a workplace, including colleagues and students, must ensure that control is exercised with due regard to the safety, health and welfare of themselves and others. Colleagues and students should ensure they follow information provided during their inductions and training as well as in documentation provided. They must report concerns in respect to health, safety and wellbeing to their line manager or supervisor.

2.9 Unit/School Safety Officers

Appointed and managed locally, Unit Safety Officers (SSO), including BSS, RPS and GM Chairs, offer health and safety support and advice to colleagues and their Head of Unit. They provide practical advice and keep colleagues informed of new requirements and developments, especially changes to policy and management standards. They will assist line managers with the implementation of health and safety policy and procedures. SSOs will also be involved in inspections and other monitoring for health, safety and wellbeing purposes.

2.10 Occupational Health and Safety Service (OHSS)

OHSS is a central support service consisting of competent Health & Safety and Occupational Health Teams. OHSS provide services to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of colleagues, students, visitors and others, across the full spectrum of University activities and locations, and in so doing, facilitate the University's attainment of its core research, teaching and engagement objectives.

The services that are delivered include provision of advice and support, training, auditing, health assessments, health surveillance and oversight of the University's Health & Safety management arrangements. OHSS are committed to facilitating an effective, proportionate and sensible approach to risk management across the University.

2.11 Specific Health and Safety Accountabilities

The Health and Safety Management Standards referred to in the Organisational Arrangements Section of this policy provide further detail in relation to specific health and safety roles and responsibilities regarding specific areas of health and safety or wellbeing.

3. Organisational Arrangements

3.1 Health and Safety Management Standards

The organisational arrangements are documented in a series of [Health and Safety Management Standards](#) which set out what the University expects to be achieved for each individual health and safety topic. The arrangements define the standards required to ensure that the necessary health, safety and wellbeing controls are in place for specific topics and further describe the responsibilities of those required to ensure that the standards are met. These arrangements are to be considered as University policy and must be complied with at all times.

3.2 Local Arrangements

Further specific arrangements will be identified in local or specific Unit Health and Safety Policies.

3.3 University Health and Safety Committees System

Health and Safety Committees are organised on a Unit, Faculty and University wide basis. This ensures good corporate governance and enables effective two way communication, both top down and bottom up. The University Committee structure is as follows;

- EB and Council - University Health and Safety Committee formally report to the EB. Health, safety and wellbeing is a standing agenda item and a summary report from University Health and Safety Committee will be provided by the Executive Board Member with responsibility for health and safety. Governance is provided and intervention is taken where considered necessary. As required by the University Health and Safety Management System an Annual Health and Safety Report of the Committee is agreed by EB and Council.
- University Health and Safety Committee - Faculty Committees subsequently report to the University Health and Safety Committee which is formally defined and which is the University statutory Health and Safety Committee. The University Health and Safety Committee includes representation from the recognised Trade Unions, for the purposes of consultation and negotiation.
- Faculty Health and Safety Committee - The local committees report to each Faculty Health and Safety Committee for information, coordination, communication and monitoring.
- Local, Unit Health and Safety Committee – A local Health and Safety committee is self-managed within each Unit, unless agreed with OHSS.

3.4 Sub Committees

The Biosafety, Radiation Protection and Health and Wellbeing Committees are sub committees of the University Health and Safety Committee, formed to advise on and monitor specific hazard activities. The Biosafety Committee also meets the legal requirement for the University to form a Genetic Modification Safety Committee. The Health and Wellbeing Committee is a sub-committee of University Health and Safety Committee formed to monitor the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan.

The Sub Committees act with full delegated authority on behalf of the University Health and Safety Committee and formally report on a regular, ongoing basis to the University Health and Safety Committee.

3.5 University Health and Safety Management System

The University Health and Safety Management System provides the arrangements for the plan, do, check, act approach in the University. The University will ensure the effective management of risks by setting, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the health and safety management system. The way that we do this is by implementing a plan, do, check, act approach. Monitoring and review is undertaken at a Unit, Faculty and University level.

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Appendix A

