

University Safety & Resilience (USR) 2025 Annual Report

Executive Summary

2025 saw the merger of Estates Compliance, Safety and Environmental Protection Service (SEPS), Radiation Protection Service (RPS) and Business Continuity teams to form the new University Safety and Resilience (USR) team of 20 staff. The role of USR was to deliver a one stop service of effective safety partnering across all Colleges, Schools and University Services. The consultation process for the changes was completed and closed out at the end of the year.

Key priorities completed were filling the Radiation Technician vacancy, organising the new teams to ensure that responsibilities and outputs were clear to deliver University safety compliance and assurance and building safety management skills and experience of the team through coaching, mentoring and supporting continuing professional development.

Compliance was confirmed through internal and external audits on how we store and use our radioactive materials, inspections of our biological safety protocols to meet our stringent licence conditions, confirmation that our hazardous waste licence conditions and processes were followed and complying with chemical safety best practices across our research services. Control measures were confirmed and any gaps identified by the team or external regulatory agencies were addressed and closed out.

We saw a 50% reduction in our reportable accidents under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) compared to the previous year with a total of 6 RIDDOR accidents versus 12 in 2024.

The level of minor accidents, year on year, was similar although there was a focus in developing leading indicators to improve safety. One example was issuing proactive safety alerts, and another was delivering safety conversations to improve the communication of the safety message.

Safety alerts and safety conversations were also a feature of near miss incidents associated with our contractor base who have continued to achieve a low level of accidents across the various projects and work activities relative to the large scale of work carried out.

The team also maintained strong contractor safety management through leadership inspections and spot audits and delivering our 'Don't Walk By' near miss reporting programme across Estates and into new areas such as Commercial Services.

The annual contractor and consultants partner safety forum was convened on the main campus in August, and this continues to be an effective means of articulating the University standards for safety while listening to our key partners who manage the safety of the construction work across all our campuses.

The safety team have introduced a permit system for contractors to control high risk areas across our Estate. This has led to an improvement of safer roof access, working at height, electrical safety, fire safety management and asbestos management across the contractor frameworks.

A new feature in the safety programme was the initiative of appointing and mentoring 9 Safety Champions. This type of approach greatly contributed to our sixth successive gold safety award from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) for demonstrating a continuous improvement in safety management.

Following a planned HSE inspection at Garscube in October for the renewal of the University Specified Animal Pathogens Order (Scotland) (SAPO) the new licence was successfully granted in December 2025 and will be valid for five years. HSE have been engaging with the HE Sector on improvements on air handling testing for microbiological safety cabinets under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (CoSHH) Regulations and following the inspection we received an enforcement letter with three action points which included this type of testing to be completed. We remain on schedule to close out the action points and evidence these in our response to the HSE.

We re-launched a new format of the SEPS safety management audit processes and ensured that action plans were promptly issued a week after the audit, and in agreement with the services audited. This approach was well received and led to a significant improvement in closing out the actions in collaboration.

We saw the introduction of a new Health Check Safety Audit. These audits covered a sampling approach of how critical risks are managed and confirming that best practice safety standards were being adopted. The new suite of audits now highlights the gaps and actions required while highlighting where good practices are being adopted. Sharing these practices has helped build a positive safety culture.

Reporting to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee (HSWC) saw the introduction of a quarterly USR Director's report covering the team updates on safety issues and a safety scorecard reporting on performance. There is now a focus on developing lagging indicators, such as accident data, and leading indicators, such as training and safety alerts. The balanced scorecard approach provides a more proactive assessment of performance and identifying areas of improvement.

There was one major fire incident at SUERC and involved the USR team to support on radiation and fire safety standards as well as investigating the causes and corrective actions required. Fire safety management is under one team in USR, and the year finished with closing off the backlog of our fire risk assessments and planning a university wide workshop on our fire risk assessment process adopted across our portfolio of assets. Our objective is to better engage with the Schools and Colleges on this process.

A collaboration with Disability Services, IT Services, Security and the USR Fire Safety team led to an improved and robust process of assessing Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP) for students who have disabilities. The work has ensured we continue to provide a duty of care to these students.

The seconded Business Continuity Adviser established the gaps in the Business Continuity (BC) plans and arrangements across the Colleges and Schools. A successful business continuity workshop was delivered involving the senior managers across Estates to better inform the existing BC risks and gaps. The BC Adviser role will continue to be developed over 2026.

Training delivery was strong once again given the broad range of training provision, covering in-house specialist safety training across all the risk areas as well as third party training for our Emergency First Aid and Mental Health First Aid courses.



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