

Minutes of Safety Committee 22/Nov/2011

Present: Douglas Irons, Andrew Glidle, Brian Robb, Margaret Lucas, Chris Pearce, Nikolaj Gadegaard, Donald Ballance, Bernard Hoey, Neil Owen, Safa Hashim, Marc Sorel, Douglas Macintyre

Discussion of who was responsible for what in terms of safety:

RA's and PhD students: Line management structure from the Head of School, via the Research Division Heads to the Academic members of Staff – academic members of staff should be in a position to make a competent health/safety assessment of the activities that people they are responsible for supervising; if not, they should find someone that is, or not carry out the activities.

Heads of Research Divisions are responsible for ensuring those under them make risk/health/safety assessments and need to rely on the competence of the staff to do this. In the event of a serious accident that involved HSE inspectors making enquiries, the likelihood is that they would want to see whether or not the supervisor and student/RA had made appropriate risk assessments, and would look to see that the Research Division Head, the Head of School and Director of Safety individually and collectively had sufficiently emphasised the need to make adequate assessments, followed up on this, and where necessary provided the appropriate training to enable the assessed activity to be carried out safely. If the training could not be carried out, the activity should not be undertaken.

For undergraduate students, the Heads of Discipline should take responsibility for ensuring that Codes of Practice for the teaching labs and, where necessary, individual risk assessments were prepared for particular practical activities. Again, this would need to be delegated as appropriate to the academics running specific labs and courses.

School Handbook:

Collated from a selection of Handbooks across GU and elsewhere with the overall aim of not making it too long/making it readable.

The notion of having a shorter main handbook, with supplements specific to particular activities (biological, chemical, lasers etc) was proposed and thought appropriate

Draft handbook had been given to new and established RAs and PhD students to read/comment on – all found it readable, but towards the end so said their eyes were starting to glaze over

Discussed whether the opening paragraphs were a bit formal/intimidating (following feedback from students).

- Meeting felt that the formal nature of the opening paragraphs should be kept
- Other student feedback included highlighting some of the emergency plan with bullet points

- Suggested that indication of First aid measures/where to get first aid should be more prominent – this could be done by having a few bullet points on the opening page, underneath the table of contents
- Following discussions in the meeting, diagrammatic safety structure can now be added
- An indication of the various light levels that triggered particular hazard categories should be given in the laser and bright light source appendix

Induction talks to PhD students:

AG to give a talk to first years at the meeting next week

Discussed whether it would be necessary/should be given to the existing years – meeting thought that it should on the basis that if it was deemed necessary for 1st years, it should be done for other years too. This will be arranged early in the new year.

Induction for MSc students and visiting overseas (Singaporean) students:

This will be done after exams in June

Safety talks for undergraduate – this already happens in most of the disciplines, safety is covered in individual labs too. Discussions with various Heads of Disciplines beforehand had indicated that most would prefer to keep it within their Discipline, rather than have it done on a School-wide basis. Meeting felt that there should nevertheless be something for final year project students (at the moment they all have to make individual risk assessments and go through these with their supervisor anyway as part of the preparations for their project, so this is covered to a certain extent)

Room-by-room, or area-by-area codes of practice:

The notion of having these codes of practice was to reduce the level of detail that needed to be put into the individual risk assessments written by people performing specific tasks/activities

These should be fairly short documents – 2-3 pages and given to people when they start to work in a particular area (e.g. to new PhD students/MSc/Undergraduate/RAs/Technicians)

Following a tour of the buildings, AG has identified which activities/people are associated with which rooms across the school. Meeting discussed who should prepare the Codes of Practice and depending on the area, different people could be involved in the mechanics of preparing the document. However, it is the responsibility of the Head of Research Division to ensure these were done. It was agreed that AG would discuss with each research head who was best placed to be responsible for each group of labs, and then AG would approach those people individually and ask them to put together a code of practice based on either a template that he produced, or any other format as long as it contained a baseline level of information (to be provided in the template).

For teaching labs, Heads of Discipline would be approached to discover who was most suited to do the Code of Practice for a particular teaching lab – much of this would be covered by a general School-wide Undergraduate safety handbook.

Undergraduate safety handbook was briefly discussed and AG suggested that the old EEE model seemed quite good/readable, and asked if other Heads of Discipline could each

contribute a small paragraph pertinent to their activities, so that it could be a School wide handbook.

New Risk Assessment forms:

Three forms based on general activities, chemical activities and biological activities had been put together.

These had been trialed extensively across the School and were generally found to be easy to fill in. Various students had suggested additions and these, and others made in the meeting (such as the scheme of work and links to an MSDS database) will be incorporated into the final version of the forms.

Who should approve the form was discussed, and it was felt that the suggestion of the supervisor and laboratory responsible should both approve it (these will generally be one in the same person) was appropriate.

For off-site activities, the use of existing field trip forms would still be possible.