

Bangor University

HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Date: 13 May 2022

Present: Professor Gareth Roberts (Chair), Miss Suzanne Barnes, Mrs Tracy Hibbert, Mr Gareth W. Jones, Dr John Latchford, Dr Kevin Mundy, Mrs Rachel Parry, Miss Emma Riches, Dr Huw Roberts, Professor Jean White, Mr Aron Williams, Mr Merf Williams, Mr Paul Wood and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary)

Apologies Dr David Assinder, Mr Alan Jones, Mr Wayne Jones, Ms Jan Roberts, Dr Gary Robinson, Ms Mair Rowlands, Professor Paul Spencer and Mr Lars Wiegand

The Committee was held through Microsoft Teams

617 Welcome

Professor Jean White and Mr Paul Wood were welcomed to their first meeting of the Committee. It was noted that Mrs Gwenan Hine was taking over as Secretary to the Committee, and thanks was extended to Miss Suzanne Barnes for taking the minutes previously.

618 Minutes of the last meeting

Agreed The minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2021 were **agreed**. It was noted that there had been a longer than usual gap between meetings due to the change in secretariat, but that going forward the Committee would revert to three meetings per academic year.

619 Matters Arising

Noted There were no matters arising which were not on the agenda.

620 Report from the Health, Safety and Emergency Management Task Group

Received The Minutes of the Health, Safety and Emergency Management Task Group meetings held on 16 December 2021, 6 January 2022, 17 February 2022, 17 March 2022 and 18 April 2022 from Dr Mundy.

Noted Dr Mundy presented the minutes of the Health, Safety and Emergency Management Task Group meetings from December 2021 to April 2022. It was noted that the Group had met monthly throughout the pandemic but may meet less frequently going forward. The Group had monitored the Covid-19 situation at the University, taken into account the local situation, and responded to changing Welsh Government guidance over the course of the last few months. Dr Mundy drew the Committee's attention in particular to the following items:

- The Task Group had overseen the regular updating of the University's Covid-19 Risk Assessment;

- Changes to Welsh Government Covid-19 requirements and guidance were considered at each meeting;
- The Group had regularly considered the University's dynamic working arrangements;
- Case rates at the University, and in the local region had been monitored; and
- At its April meeting the Group had agreed (from 28th May) to:
 - o Revise maximum capacities in rooms;
 - o Begin to remove temporary Perspex screens, and consider providing temporary movable screens for staff if they are concerned;
 - o Remove general Covid-19 signage from walls and floors, utilising building information screens to remind individuals of the remaining controls;
 - o Contact key building users to ascertain which Covid-19 controls were a success and could be continued;
 - o Amend the narrative on face coverings to highlight that individuals should feel able to wear face coverings wherever they feel appropriate;
 - o Remove restrictions on multi occupancy office accommodation;
 - o Over the summer assess teaching and seminar rooms and revise capacities where appropriate;
 - o Recommend that the practice of using staff offices for tutorials is discouraged;
 - o Include Covid-19 and general public health messages in Halls and College health and safety talks for new students;
 - o Develop new activity / research Covid-19 protocols for higher risk activities; and
 - o Develop the existing Coronavirus Risk Assessment into a more generic workplace public health risk assessment.

As well as overseeing arrangements in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic the Task Group had undertaken reviews of health and safety policies relating to the use of drones and safe use of pressure systems. The Committee also noted that the Task Group had been informed of a near miss incident involving the College of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, which is referred to in minute 623 below.

Professor White welcomed the assurances provided in the minutes of the Task Group which showed that the University had carefully considered the health and safety of staff and students throughout the pandemic. Following a question by Professor White relating to the wellbeing of staff, and the impact of the pandemic on staff mental health Mrs Hibbert assured the Committee that work had been ongoing throughout the last two years to provide training sessions and workshops and to provide all staff and manager guidance on a whole range of issues (which were also provided by Student Services and the Students' Union to students). The Occupational Health Practitioner had also been involved in ensuring that those members of staff who required further support were provided with assistance on a case-by-case basis. Dr Mundy also noted that the University had provided opportunities for staff who were experiencing loneliness during the pandemic to have a choice of working at the University and to meet colleagues in a safe environment, which Dr Latchford and Dr Roberts endorsed.

621 Review: Health and Safety Policy Statement

Received Health and Safety Policy Statement, from Mr G W Jones

Noted Mr G.W. Jones advised the Committee that the University's Health and Safety Policy Statement should normally be reviewed by the Committee every three years, with a formal review now due, the current statement having come into force from 1st March 2019. The Committee were reminded that an amendment had been made to the policy statement in 2021 with the addition of item xvii. relating to systems for managing the risk of a pandemic / epidemic. The Committee were asked to consider whether there were any aspects of the Policy Statement which required amendment at this time. It was noted that the Health, Safety and Emergency Management Task Group had already considered the Policy Statement and no amendments had been recommended.

Professor White requested further information on the health and safety arrangements for students under the age of 18 and Mr G.W. Jones confirmed that a separate document, outlining the University's organisational health and safety responsibilities did contain a section about under 18s, children and adults at risk.

Recommended Following discussion and due consideration the Committee **recommended** that the Health and Safety Policy Statement be submitted to the next meeting of the University Council for approval.

622 Health and Safety Annual Report

Received Health and Safety Annual Report 2020/21, from Mr G W Jones

Noted Mr G W Jones presented the 2020/21 Annual Health and Safety Report. The Committee were advised that the Annual Report summarised a period which was wholly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in a notable decrease in on-site activity. It was noted that a number of key performance indicators had been missed during the year due to the pandemic, and activities such as training and audits which had not been completed due to staff not being on campus were being undertaken during the 2021/22 academic year:

- For the 2020/21 academic year the total number of reported Covid-19 cases at the University was 429, comprising 63 staff cases and 356 student cases;
- The University had worked closely with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to establish an onsite student PCR testing facility;
- The University's in-house Covid-APP and the administrative arrangements around its use had been a huge success and had enabled regional Test, Trace and Protect arrangements to work closely with the University;
- An internal audit on home working and returning to the campus had provided assurance that suitable arrangements were in place;
- The provision of health and safety training had been impacted during the pandemic, with the number of training sessions reduced or not held due to close-contact and related Covid-19 restrictions;
- No enforcement action was taken against the University in 2020/21, and no investigations were initiated;
- 73.5% of new staff attended the staff induction which was 16.5% below the target;
- 75.2% of staff completed the computer users training and self-assessment which was 9.8% below the target;

- There were 9.6 accidents and injuries per 1000 employees. This was slightly below the sector average which was 9.87 accidents per 1000 employees. There were no major injuries during 2020/21;
- During 2020/21 there were two Health & Safety Executive Reportable Accidents and Incidents (RIDDOR) one related to a student who had a cut finger, and one related to a member of staff who had received a knock on the head from a falling object;
- The staff sickness absence rate was 3.87 days lost per FTE employee which was 0.53 days below the HE sector for the same period;
- No adverse work-related health impact results were identified during health surveillance work in 2020/21;
- There were 98 fire alarm activations during 2020/21 which was a 34% increase on the 2019/20 figure. The North Wales Fire & Rescue Service attended the University 22 times, 21 of these were to Halls of Residences between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m.; and
- There was one Employer Liability claim during the period relating to the injury to a member of staff from a knock to the head from a falling object.

Following a question from Professor White, Mr G W Jones confirmed that the University did not have any aluminium composite cladding on its buildings. It was also noted that the University currently had sprinkler systems in 600 halls of residence bedrooms, with work planned over the summer to instal further sprinklers in bedrooms.

Approved Following discussion the Health and Safety Annual Report was **approved** for submission to the Council at its next meeting. The Chair thanked the whole health and safety team for their hard work during this time.

623 Accidents, Incidents and Significant Events

Received In-year Accidents, Incidents and Significant Events Report August 2021 – January 2022, from Mr G W Jones

Noted The Committee noted the information presented in the In-year Accidents, Incidents and Significant Events Report, which had recently been presented to the Council.

In addition Mr G W Jones provided the Committee with further information on a near miss incident which had the potential to cause serious injury. It was reported that the incident related to the use of a volatile solvent within a pressurised vessel and the subsequent failure of that vessel which may, in different circumstances, have resulted in serious injury to anyone standing nearby. It was noted that an apparent failure to fully consider the impact of a change of chemicals (for chemical cleaning) and the additional potential risks of atomising volatile solvents had resulted in the near miss incident. Following a thorough consideration of the incident it had been decided to remind all Colleges and Services of the need to review their risk assessments, to specifically highlight the need to consider wider issues which may not have been evaluated, and to consider supervision and oversight in light of Dynamic Working and the reduced numbers of staff onsite.

624 Reports from Sub-Committees

Received The minutes of the Radiation Health & Safety Sub-Committee meeting held on 24 January 2022 and the minutes of the Chemical and Biological Health & Safety Sub-Committee held on 24 January 2022

Radiation Health & Safety Sub-Committee

Noted The Committee noted the minutes of the Radiation Health & Safety Sub-Committee meeting held on 24 January 2022. In particular the following points were drawn to the attention of members:

- Work was ongoing to prepare the Robinson Building Basement Radiation Store for demolition later in the year (minute 16047);
- A review of the University's Radon Risk Assessment had been undertaken, and various actions relating to Halls of Residence and to the Henfaes Farmhouse were noted (minute 16048);
- The Sub-Committee had received reports relating to open sources of radiation, and on the use of X-rays (minutes 16049 & 16050);
- An update had been received in relation to the Nuclear Futures Institute, noting that the NFI was now a Qualifying Nuclear Facility with Limited Operations, and was overseen by the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR); and
- A report was received in relation to the use of lasers in various locations on the University campus.

The Chair thanked the Sub-committee for their continued diligent work in this area.

Chemical and Biological Health & Safety Sub-Committee

Noted The Committee noted the minutes of the Chemical and Biological Health & Safety Sub-Committee meeting held on 24 January 2022. In particular the following points were drawn to the attention of members:

- A Biohazard Inspection and Review had been undertaken and a number of updates were noted (minute 16049);
- An update on health surveillance work was received (minute 16050);
- The Sub-Committee were apprised of the relevant accidents and incidents during 2021, and a number of particular events noted (minute 16051); and
- A report on work involving genetically modified organisms was underway.

Following a question from Professor White, Dr Latchford outlined the processes in place at the University in relation to work involving animals.

The Chair welcomed the assurances provided to the Committee from both Sub-Committees.