

Bangor University  
**MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**Meeting:** 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Present:** Prof. G Roberts (Chair), Miss S Barnes, Mrs T Hibbert, Mr A Jones, Dr J Latchford, Prof P Mullins, Dr K Mundy, Mrs R Parry, Miss E Riches, Dr H Roberts, Mrs J Roberts, Dr G Robinson, Ms M Rowlands, Mr L Wiegand, Mr G W Jones (Secretary)

**Pre-Meeting Note:** The Chair reported that Council members had been kept informed regarding health and safety and Covid-19 mitigation arrangements and were naturally concerned regarding how the University would be able to operate safely. However, Council could now be assured, with a high level of confidence, in relation to health and safety arrangements and the Chair expressed great appreciation for the work that has been undertaken by all staff under challenging conditions.

Special appreciation was given to the central H&S Team and Property & Campus Services.

A discussion ensued with the consensus that:

- i. The University is doing an exceptional job, including by comparison with many other institutions, to provide the best teaching experience possible whilst ensuring the health and safety of staff and students.
- ii. The University has managed to cater successfully for very different wishes amongst staff, for those concerned about face-to-face teaching as well as those wishing to return to continue research. Staff value this 'non-blanket' approach.
- iii. Students are generally aware and appreciative of the level of work needed to provide blended learning, on-campus experiences and other types of activities such as fieldwork.

**Apologies:** Mr T Williams, Prof P Spencer, Mr W Jones, Mr H Williams, Mr M Williams, Mr H Ellis

**588. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020 were confirmed and signed.

**589. Matters Arising**

The follow matters were noted:

- i. *583 (i) Statistics:* HR has reminded staff to report sickness absences as normal, even when working from home.
- ii. *586: Home Working during the Covid-19 Pandemic:* It was noted that an interim Home Working Policy, produced by Human Resources, and a supporting Working at Home Risk Assessment, produced by Health & Safety, are in place. Both documents are available on-line on the Staff Covid-19 web pages. The area will be monitored, particularly in relation to the pressures and stress of working from home.

## 590. Report from the Health, Safety & Emergency Management Task Group (HSEMTG)

Since the last meeting of the Health and Safety Committee, the Task Group has met four times. The following key items were noted:

- i. In September the University moved towards a 'business as normal, as far as reasonable' approach with Covid issues discussed within the pre-Covid meeting structure.
- ii. Extraordinary meetings to discuss specific issues take place, for example, Covid-19 testing of students returning home at the end of term.
- iii. The University's Covid-19 Risk Assessment is regularly reviewed.
- iv. A Green, Amber and Red categorisation of activities has been implemented.
- v. A University Face Covering Policy is now in place.
- vi. Recognising the fact that group travel creates a high transmission risk, the use of minibuses is prohibited. Coach travel initially classified as an Amber activity with significantly reduced capacities is now a Green or Red activity, dependant on capacity.
- vii. Following agreement at Executive that all Red activities must be approved by PVC/ Heads of College and the Task Group, several discussions have taken place regarding Red teaching and research activities in Schools.
- viii. An internal audit on home working and returning to campus has provided assurance that suitable arrangements are in place. Minor recommendations are currently being addressed.
- ix. The Task Group has decided that at the current time the University cannot allow University facilities to be used for visiting sports teams.
- x. An RSM Audit noted that the University H&S Policy did not specifically reference pandemics and how the University would react and put in place appropriate arrangements to mitigate against risks. An amendment to the University Health and Safety Policy Statement was considered and subsequently agreed, which read as:  
*xvii. React to any pandemic or epidemic and put in place suitable systems, arrangements and controls to mitigate and manage risk and to safeguard the health and well-being of staff and students.*

The amendment will now be considered by University Council.

## 591. Covid-19 Report

A summary of the work that has been undertaken to mitigate against Covid-19 risks and to ensure the health and safety of staff and students, was provided. It was noted that:

- i. When planning to re-open the University referred to legislative advice, with legislative requirements split between the UK Government and the Welsh Government. Emphasis is placed on social distancing, good hand hygiene and being aware of what individuals need to do to stay safe.
- ii. Since March extensive work has been undertaken to ensure suitable arrangements are in place to manage risk, with work ongoing to continually improve upon these. Some of the work to date has included the fitting of 1km (in length) of Perspex

screens, fitting 3000 tiered lecture theatre seat straps, removing 3100 chairs, displaying 9000 posters, providing circa 6000 litres of hand sanitiser gel / foam.

- iii. All arrangements are overseen by the Covid-19 Risk Assessment which is monitored by HSEMTG to ensure it reflects current University activities and legislative requirements.
- iv. Inspections and site visits are ongoing to seek assurance arrangements are working.
- v. Schools have implemented robust, local arrangements to enable activities to be undertaken safely.
- vi. Since September the University has had an on-site Student Test Facility supported by BCUHB. The University is informed as soon as a student attends for a test and of all Covid-19 positive results. This enables the University to identify possible contacts and implement an appropriate response e.g. isolating a whole Halls flat.
- vii. To support Test, Trace and Protect, the monitoring attendance Check In App has been developed to capture other University activities students may participate in.

#### **591(a) Covid-19 Data**

A summary of the Covid-19 data available to the University was provided:

- i. The system allows the University to track Covid-19+ cases.
- ii. At the first week of term there were 3 Covid-19+ cases rising to 49 cases by the 1st October. The pattern was similar to that in other institutions with students arriving from elsewhere and bringing Covid-19 with them.
- iii. By 9th October there were 163 Covid-19+ cases, although as quickly as cases rose they decreased with only 1 new case by 15th October.
- iv. The extension of the Check In App to capture student attendance at other University events has been essential in helping to trace possible contacts to ensure appropriate action is taken to prevent the spread of the virus.
- v. As of 20th November, 259 Covid-19+ cases have been recorded since the start of the Academic Year with one current Covid-19+ case in Halls and 5 cases away from the Bangor area.
- vi. Staff numbers have been low with cases not specifically associated with a University activity.
- vii. A very efficient system is in place between the University, local authorities and Test & Trace to capture positive cases and potential contacts.
- viii. The Students' Union is facilitating sessions to educate students to encourage safe behaviour.

#### **592. Annual H&S Report**

A summary of the 2019/20 Annual Health and Safety Report, previously distributed, was discussed and the following key points noted:

- i. **KPIs: Attendance at central General H&S Training:** 221 members of staff undertook central health and safety training during the year.

- ii. **Training KPIs:** The 2019/20 target was missed by 47%. 63 out of 145 new (applicable) contracted staff completed the General University Staff Induction. The target for 2020/2021 will remain at 90%.
- iii. **Computer User Training:** 226 staff completed the online Computer Users Training (bringing the total to 82.96% of estimated Computer Users having completed the training). This figure is a 2.4% increase from last year's total of 81%, however it fell short of the target of 85%, mainly due to Covid-19 working restrictions.
- iv. **Accidents and Incidents:** There were 29 (56 in 18/19) injury-accidents to staff and students reported (23 to staff and 6 to students). The accident and incident rates have reduced notably due to the cessation of many activities due to lockdown.
- v. **Lost Time Staff Incidents:** No lost-time injury reports were received.
- vi. **Non-Injury Reports:** 101 non-injury incidents reported. 76 involved a near miss, dangerous situation, unsafe practice and the remaining 25 were reports of medical incidents (such as fainting, illness and convulsions).
- vii. **Overseas Travel:** Trips are significantly down due to the cessation of travel in March. At the on-set of Covid-19, 10 staff and students requested support via the University to return, whilst 22 students elected to remain overseas.
- viii. **Vehicle Incidents:** There were 2 motor vehicle accident claims; one for slight front apron damage at a cost £620 and the other was for rather more substantial damage to the side of a large MPV, with a cost of £2,470.
- ix. **Site Inspections:** The number of construction/ maintenance in-house H&S Inspections decreased to 74, from 189 in 18/19. The findings of those inspections undertaken showed a slight increase in warnings issued.
- x. **Sickness Absence:** A staff sickness absence rate of 3.96 days per FTE employees (5.47 days in 2018/19) was reported, equating to 1.82% of time lost to sickness absence (6,293 working days). Long-term absences, those greater than 20 days, accounted for 56.7% of working days.
- xi. **Health Surveillance:** No adverse work-related health-impact results were received in 19/20.
- xii. **Fire Alarm Activations:** There were 73 Fire Alarm activations in University buildings (32 in Academic / Admin buildings and 41 in Halls), a 24% decrease on the 96 in 18/19. The North Wales Fire & Rescue Service attended the University on 18 occasions due to a fire call, 17 of these to Halls of Residences. The decrease primarily due to the evacuation of Halls to a large degree in March as a result of Covid-19.
- xiii. **Fires:** There was one fire, which although not in a building was on University land, this as a result of a malicious act with articles of clothing and bedding set on fire.
- xiv. **Civil Claims:** There was one Employer Liability Claim from a past member of staff and four Public Liability Claims for a slip on a wet floor, a Research project claim and damage to vehicles (x2) from a malfunctioning automatic bollard system at M-SParc.
- xv. A discussion ensued, it was noted work is ongoing to improve systems which will enable capturing of staff Induction attendance, in addition observations were made that sickness absence reporting and sickness may have dropped as a result of working

from home and being able to work to some degree even if feeling unwell.

**593. Annual Review of the Performance and Effectiveness of the Committee**

The process for the Committee to assure its own effectiveness was discussed. The Chair asked members to confirm if they felt the H&S Committee was effective and empowered to challenge aspects of health and safety, in turn raising awareness with Council.

Following discussion, the members affirmed that the Committee is effective and empowered.

**594. Arrangements for the Mass Testing of Students, Covid-19**

A summary of the work to support students returning home for Christmas was provided. The following key items were noted:

- i. In October the University started to plan for the departure of students at Christmas in recognition that what happened at the beginning of the academic year with arriving students could happen in reverse with students transmitting the virus to their community.
- ii. Initially the University tried to recognise 'at risk' students (i.e. those going home to vulnerable persons) and preparation work, in conjunction with BCUHB, commenced to enable asymptomatic testing of such students.
- iii. Subsequently, in the last 10 days, the Welsh Government announced mass testing would be provided for students returning home. This is a UK Government led initiative facilitated by Deloittes with all 'signed up' Universities agreeing to facilitate mass testing before students return home.
- iv. At Bangor, student testing will commence on 30<sup>th</sup> November until 8<sup>th</sup> December in PJ Hall. A Lateral Flow Device (provides a quick response) will be used. From Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> November, students will be able to access the system to book a test, with two tests (as the LFD process may not detect early on-set symptoms) preferred before departure.
- v. Asymptomatic testing will also be made available to staff.
- vi. From 4<sup>th</sup> December most courses will transfer to on-line teaching only.
- vii. Work is ongoing to engage with Transport for Wales and to assess student travel patterns to encourage students to stagger travel home.

**595. Any Other Business**

- i. The Chair thanked those involved with preparing for the meeting.

**The next H&S Committees are scheduled as follows:**

10<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 2pm, Terrace Conference Room 3

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021, 2pm, Terrace Conference Room 3

Further to the recommendation of the Internal Audit by RSM that “Management will review, update and approve the Health and Safety Policy given the recent significant changes in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, Homeworking and Returning to Campus, as set out in the Policy Review statement in section 23 of the Health and Safety Policy” the following addition is recommended for the University’s Health and Safety Policy Statement (see point xvii).

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## **1.0 GENERAL STATEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

- 1.1** It is the policy of Bangor University, so far as is reasonably practicable, but in accordance with the relevant legislation, statutory requirements and good practice, to ensure the health and safety of staff, students and visitors to the University.
- 1.2** This statement sets out the full commitment of the Council and the senior management of the University to implementing this policy, provide leadership in health and safety and ensure that proper consideration and support are given to health and safety provisions, as appropriate.
- 1.3** In practical terms the responsibility for ensuring the safe performance of any activity rests with those who have, to any degree, the management, stewardship, supervision or control of it, or, who arrange and direct it, as well as with those who carry it out. Everyone must have regard for health and safety and the importance of maintaining appropriate standards.
- 1.4** The University considers that health and safety procedures are about the management of risk and not necessarily about the elimination of risk. Their purpose is not to prevent activities on the grounds that an element of risk exists, but to enable activities to be undertaken in a reasonable and safe manner.
- 1.5** The University is also committed, as far as is reasonably practicable, to:
  - i. Ensuring the prevention of injury and health impairment to all those affected by its activities;
  - ii. Achieving and maintaining good practice in health and safety;
  - iii. Promoting positive health and safety behaviour and culture;
  - iv. Seek continued improvement in overall health and safety performance;
  - v. Enable and promote inclusivity and safeguard those with additional needs.
- 1.6** In pursuance of these commitments, the University’s objectives are to:
  - i. Promote the use of good health and safety practices in both existing and proposed activities and managerial systems;
  - ii. Appropriately resource health and safety risk management and the implementation of this Policy Statement through the provision of adequate personnel, support, expert assistance, competent advice, time and funding;
  - iii. Supplement this Policy with more detailed Policy Standards, management systems and information on particular hazards and risks;

- iv. Provide and maintain premises and equipment that are operated without significant risk to health and safety;
- v. Identify hazards that may arise through the activities of the University, to assess the risks arising and to implement effective control measures to eliminate, minimize or manage any significant risks and thereby enable the activities to occur safely;
- vi. Implement safe systems of work that eliminate or control all significant hazards and risks to health and safety;
- vii. Provide such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure the health and safety of staff, students and others;
- viii. Implement a monitoring, inspection and auditing procedure to ensure effective management of health and safety throughout the University;
- ix. Consult and work with employees and employee representatives on health and safety matters;
- x. Encourage staff to set good standards of health and safety by personal example;
- xi. Make arrangements for the dissemination of relevant information, co-ordination of policy and practice and cooperation with other employers or establishments where University employees or students share premises or facilities with them and where other employees and contractors work on University premises;
- xii. Monitor the overall health and safety position of the University via a regularly reviewed and annually reported Health and Safety Risk Profile;
- xiii. Critically evaluate relevant data on the health and safety performance of the University;
- xiv. Report annually on Health and Safety Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and compare these against relevant sector norms, where possible and with due regard to other contextual information;
- xv. Keep all Health and Safety Policies, Policy Standards and procedures under regular review so that important and relevant legislation, Codes of Practice and appropriate guidance are taken into account;
- xvi. Utilise health and safety risk assessments and controls to promote inclusivity and support reasonable adjustments that, where reasonably practicable, enable participation and safeguards those with additional needs.
- xvii. React to any pandemic or epidemic and put in place suitable systems, arrangements and controls to mitigate and manage risk and to safeguard the health and well-being of staff and students.

This Policy Statement is supported by a Responsibilities and Arrangements document that details the roles, responsibilities, organisation and arrangements that are established to fulfil the requirements of this Policy.