

This Information Sheet provides guidance on the process that should be followed by any College / School / Professional Service investigating an accident and incident to ensure lessons are learned; with the aim to prevent a re-occurrence of the event.

## **When to carry out an Accident and Incident Investigation**

All accidents and incidents which occur at the University, or whilst on University led activities must be investigated. **This is irrespective of whether an injury occurred.** An accident and incident must not only be investigated because of the injury or ill health suffered as a result of an event, it must also be investigated if the event had the potential for harm to be caused, or the event could happen again. The investigation process will help the University to:

- Establish the cause.
- Prevent a re-occurrence.

Although all accidents and incidents must be investigated, it is equally important that extensive resources are not employed on conducting minor investigations. The amount of time etc spent on the investigation should reflect the seriousness or potential seriousness of the accident or incident. For example do not spend a week investigating how someone cut their finger opening a box of paper but take your time to investigate if staff keep hurting their backs moving materials and equipment between their office and the other locations they have to visit as part of their role.

## **Who is responsible for Investigations?**

Deans of College / Directors of Professional Services (Service) must ensure all accidents and incidents, within their area of responsibility are investigated. This function is usually delegated to the College / Service H&S Co-ordinator or the relevant Line Manager / Supervisor.

Property and Campus Services (PACS) will investigate accidents and incidents which occur on the parts of the University estate which are not allocated to, or under the control of any specific College / Service, and in some cases will also involve the Health and Safety Office (HSO).

The HSO will investigate accidents and incidents if it is unclear where the responsibility lies, or, if due to the seriousness of the event a more detailed investigation is required. For example, accidents and incidents reported to the HSE under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

## **Who should do the Investigation?**

In all circumstances the College / Service H&S Coordinator and the Line Manager / Supervisor<sup>1</sup> of the injured person should be aware of any accidents / incidents within their area of responsibility and should investigate the event to a level required by the seriousness of it.

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<sup>1</sup> Should be the person with sufficient knowledge of the injured person / work area, the task being carried out and associated risk assessments, safe working procedures etc

Other persons who may be involved in the investigation process are:

- Staff Representatives (Trades Unions, Non-Trades Unions).
- Student Representatives.
- Property and Campus Services (if a site or building issue is involved) and the HSO.

The numbers of persons involved should be kept to a minimum, to those with sufficient knowledge of the staff / student involved, the activity being undertaken, the work environment and any associated processes or procedures.

Staff and Student Representatives should be given the opportunity to participate if required and may even undertake their own separate investigation if felt appropriate.

**NOTE: The HSO will lead all investigations into accidents / incidents that require notification to the Statutory Authorities.**

### **The Investigation Process**

Line Managers, H&S Co-ordinators or Safety Representatives will usually start an investigation as a result of a verbal report. However, sometimes it is due to the receipt of an Accident and Incident Form which is why it is so important to complete them promptly.

Whoever investigates though, it is important it takes place as soon as possible when witness(es) have a clear memory of what happened and the conditions will be similar.

The **SIX** Investigation Principles are:

1. **WHO:** Who was involved or injured (if anyone)?
2. **WHEN:** When did the accident or incident occur?
3. **WHERE:** Exactly where did the accident / incident occur?
4. **HOW:** What happened to cause the accident / incident?
5. **WHY:** Why did the accident / incident occur?
6. **ACTIONS:** What can be done to prevent the accident / incident happening again?

### **Review**

It is essential that, if required, lessons are learned through the investigation process and that any actions are implemented in a timely manner and tracked until completion.

A process to formally review accidents, incidents and investigations should be incorporated into the local College / Service management structure. For example, included as an agenda item for discussion at Team Meetings, H&S Focus Groups and / or more formally at the College / Service H&S Committee.

In addition, systems must be put in place to communicate relevant information to others as required, for example a revised risk assessment via Blackboard, group email, Noticeboards, Newsletters etc.

## What to Consider

<i>Planning</i>	The investigation should establish the facts to identify the cause and make recommendations to prevent or minimise the effect of a re-occurrence.
<i>The Scene</i>	Inspect the scene as soon as possible and if necessary cordon the area off to avoid disturbance. Examine the environmental conditions and any equipment and fittings (isolate until safety is assured). Take pictures, make sketches, gather evidence such as tools, substances and any relevant documentation; signing in sheets, permits to work, risk assessments, making a note of where the items were taken from.
<i>Witness (es)</i>	Seek the views and observations of anyone who saw the incident.
<i>Witness Statements</i>	<p>If the incident was serious, witness statements will be needed. Witnesses should be interviewed one at a time; at the scene or in an informal setting.</p> <p>Put any witness at their ease. Clarify they can be accompanied and the purpose is to identify the cause and not to apportion blame. Do not put words in their mouth, but encourage them to speak freely.</p> <p>Take notes of what is said, asking the witness to read what has been written at the end, signing their statement if they wish.</p>
<i>Reporting and Concluding</i>	<p>The detail and complexity of the report should reflect the nature of the accident / incident and should follow the six principles outlined above. Whilst carrying out the investigation think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <i>The scene</i> – environmental conditions, the time, housekeeping, weather, lighting etc.</li><li>○ <i>The equipment, materials and activity</i> – consider the nature of the equipment, machinery, chemicals and materials. How much was used, in what way – are there records eg stock inventories, maintenance and usage records?</li><li>○ <i>People</i> – did the injured person and others involved have the necessary experience and capability to undertake the task eg training, inductions?</li><li>○ <i>Management Controls</i> – are safety procedures in place eg risk assessments, policies, supervision levels? Are these used and do people know about them eg Inductions, signs, Handbooks?</li><li>○ <i>Concluding</i> – what caused the accident / incident usually becomes clear following careful consideration of the facts.</li></ul>

## **Example Investigation**

The following is a spoof accident with the findings of the Investigation below. The headings follow the Six Principles outlined above, which can be found on the attached Accident and Investigation Form, found at the back of the University's Accident and Incident Form which is available on the [Health & Safety Website](#).

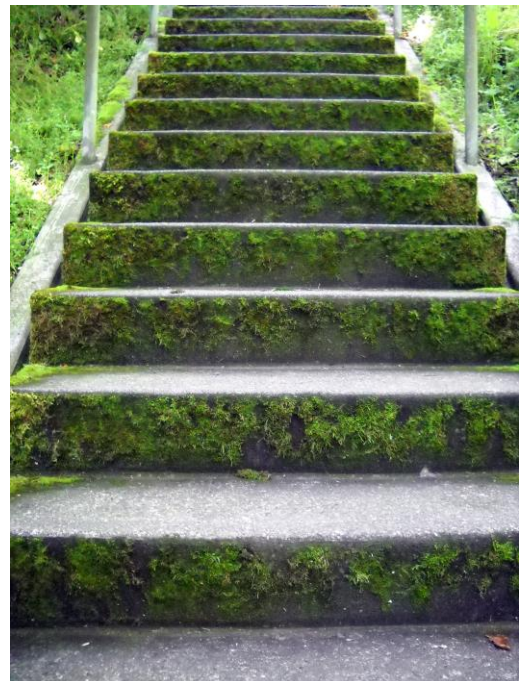
## **Setting the Scene**

Mary Bloggs sprained her left ankle after slipping on the steps below.

Mary had been taking the last of numerous bin bags (pictured below) to the waste collection point, located down a flight of steps, when she fell.



**Bin bags**



**Steps**



**Shoes worn at time**

## PART G – ACCIDENT / INCIDENT INVESTIGATION<sup>2</sup>

- All accidents and incidents which occur at the University or whilst on University led activity MUST be investigated.
- The amount of time and resources spent on the investigation should reflect the seriousness or potential seriousness of the accident / incident, it DOES NOT just depend on whether someone was injured. Further guidance can be found on the HSO Website.
- An investigation should ascertain the following:
  - Collect / preserve evidence. **Take pictures if possible.**
  - Who was involved or injured (if anyone)?
  - When did the accident / incident occur?
  - Where did the accident / incident occur?
  - How did the accident / incident occur?
  - Why did the accident / incident occur?
  - The action to take to prevent it happening again.

Name of Person(s) undertaking the Investigation:	Ivor Mop (Domestic Manager)
Date of Investigation:	14 <sup>th</sup> June 2014
Names of person(s) interviewed (witnesses):	Mary Bloggs (no other witnesses)
Who was involved / injured?	Mary Bloggs, Domestic
When did the Accident / Incident occur?	13 <sup>th</sup> June 2014, Time: 10.00am
Where did the Accident / Incident occur?	Entrance steps to Trump Tower, College Road, Top College Site
How did the Accident / Incident occur, what happened?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary slipped on the steps whilst taking the last of the 20 bin bags stored in the entrance hall to the main waste collection point at the bottom of the entrance steps.</li> <li>• The bin bag shifted causing Mary to move to one side so she lost her balance and fell down the final two steps.</li> <li>• Mary sprained her left ankle as a result of the fall and had to go to her Doctors to have it bandaged.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Taken from the University's Accident and Incident Form [www.bangor.ac.uk/hss/inflink/accidentandincidentfinalb.php.en](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/hss/inflink/accidentandincidentfinalb.php.en)

<p>What caused the Accident / Incident ie contributory factors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>See pictures above.</b></li> <li>• The staff of Trump Towers had had a major clean of their offices resulting in a lot of bin bags.</li> <li>• Mary was too helpful removing the bin bags and did not ask her Supervisor / Colleague for help.</li> <li>• Mary did not feel she could ask the Trump Towers building occupants for help.</li> <li>• Mary was getting tired towards the end of moving the bin bags to the waste collection point, especially as some of the bags were overloaded and awkward and heavy to carry.</li> <li>• Mary had not been trained how to lift things properly.</li> <li>• Mary had received no Health and Safety Induction training so did not understand why she should wear suitable flat shoes with a grip sole on the bottom.</li> <li>• The steps regularly get slippery with moss due to the overhanging trees which allow water to collect on the steps rather than dry up – this causes moss.</li> </ul>
<p>What action will be taken to prevent the Accident / Incident happening again?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary will be given office work to rest her ankle and allow it to heal.</li> <li>• Domestic Manager to write to Trump Towers staff asking them to inform her of future large clear outs so additional Domestic staff can be brought in to help.</li> <li>• Trump Towers staff to be made aware they should not overload bin bags and can transfer bags to the collection point themselves.</li> <li>• All Domestic staff to receive manual handling training.</li> <li>• All Domestic staff to receive Induction Training reminding them of key health and safety issues eg what shoes to wear, when to wear gloves, disposing of sharps etc. (Consideration will be given to purchasing suitable footwear for Domestic staff).</li> <li>• Supervisors to carry out checks to ensure staff are following Manual Handling and Induction Training guidance.</li> <li>• Staff to be reminded they can ask for help and that they can refuse to do something and ask their Supervisor for advice if they feel they are putting themselves at risk.</li> <li>• PACS to schedule maintenance regime for the steps to ensure steps are regularly jet washed and kept moss free.</li> </ul>