CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH (COSHH)

This Policy Standard states the requirements placed on Colleges, Schools and Departments to ensure hazardous substances associated with their work are used correctly and safely. This in order to ensure the health, safety and well-being of staff, students and others possibly affected by their use.

The Policy Standard also states the duties and responsibilities placed on staff and students when handling hazardous substances and materials.

The document applies to:
- All Colleges, Schools and Departments.
- All staff and students handling hazardous substances as part of a College, School / Department activity.

The document does not apply to:
- Hazardous substances used as part of a Contractor’s undertakings.

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<th>Supersedes:</th>
<th>OHSU P5 (2001)</th>
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<td>Approved by Health &amp; Safety Committee:</td>
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

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.

2. INTRODUCTION

In addition to those general duties in law, the University and its constituent Colleges, Schools and Departments, have a specific obligation under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002), to assess the risks associated with the use of hazardous substances (as defined by the Regulations) and adopt appropriate precautions to eliminate and/or control exposure.

The following definitions will apply:

- **COSHH**: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health. COSHH covers substances that are hazardous to health\(^1\). Substances take many forms: chemicals, products containing chemicals, fumes, dusts, vapours, mists, nanotechnology, gases and asphyxiating gases and biological agents (germs) (*if the packaging has any of the hazard symbols then it is classed as a hazardous substance*).

- **Hazard**: In relation to a substance, means the intrinsic property of that substance which has the potential to cause harm to the health of a person.

- **Substance**: A natural or artificial substance (or material) whether in solid or liquid form or in the form of a gas or vapour (including micro-organisms).

- **Substance Hazardous to Health**: A substance (including a preparation) which is:
  a. Listed in *Table 3.2 of part 3 of Annex VI of the Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulation* and described as very toxic, toxic, harmful, carcinogen, corrosive or irritant;
  b. Health and Safety Executive has approved a Workplace Exposure Limit for;
  c. Biological agent;
  d. Dust of any kind, except dust which is a substance within paragraph (a) or (b) above, when present at a concentration in air equal to or greater than – (i) 10 mg/m\(^3\), as a time-weighted average over an 8-hour period, of inhalable dust; or (ii) 4 mg/m\(^3\), as a time-weighted average over an 8-hour period, of respirable dust;
  e. Not being a substance as detailed (a) to (d) but because of the way it is used or is present in the workplace creates a risk to health.

3. BACKGROUND AND INFORMATION

Every year, thousands of workers become ill due to exposure to hazardous substances in their workplace. Often illnesses can lead to chronic, life changing conditions such as dermatitis. Such diseases cost many millions of pounds each year to:

- The employer.
- Individuals, who could potentially lose their livelihoods.

Due to the wide range of activities undertaken in a University environment, it is not only staff who could be at risk of exposure to a hazardous substance used during the course of their work, but also

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\(^1\) COSHH does not cover lead, asbestos or radioactive substances which have their own specific legislation
students using substances during their teaching / research. In addition, others visiting the University, or using University premises as a place of work eg contractors, could be exposed due to indirect contact with a hazardous substance.

The University has a duty to take all reasonable steps to ensure appropriate controls are in place to either eliminate the need to use a hazardous substance, and / or control the risks associated with a substance’s use. This in order to ensure the health, safety and well-being of staff, students and others who could be affected by substances used as part of a University activity.

4. DUTIES OF THE UNIVERSITY

The University has a general duty to take all reasonable steps to secure the health and safety of staff, students and / or other persons affected by hazardous substances used for University activities.

The University will also facilitate health surveillance and monitoring of members of staff whose health may be impacted through exposure to chemicals listed in Schedule 6 of the COSHH Regulations and by other substances with a similar potential, and through the requirements of Regulation 6 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

5. COLLEGE / SCHOOL / DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

This Policy Standard establishes the fundamental principles for managing the risks associated with the use of hazardous substances as part of a College / School / Department activity.

Each Dean of College and Head of School / Department must ensure the following management arrangements; to eliminate the use of hazardous substances, or where this is not possible reduce the risks arising from their use, are in place:

- a. Identify activities involving the use of hazardous substances within their area of responsibility.
- b. Assess the risks to the health and safety of anyone possibly affected by the activities, and which considers individual needs where required (eg asthma).
- c. Eliminate or reduce the risks where possible through implementing the hierarchy of risk reduction methods, including substitution with a safer process or safer material.
- d. If elimination is not possible, put in place adequate control measures to reduce risk as far as is reasonably practicable.
- e. Ensure hazardous substances, clinical waste and associated bi-products, are disposed of correctly and in accordance with the Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations.
- f. As a last resort, provide personal protective equipment (alone or in addition to other control measures) which takes account of individual needs.
- g. Provide suitable instruction, training and supervision to staff, students and others potentially affected, to make them aware of the risks associated with the substance, including correct disposal of substance, clinical waste and associated bi-products, the correct techniques to follow and equipment to use and the action to take in an emergency.
- h. Arrange (if required) for staff who routinely work with certain higher-risk hazardous substances to receive a periodic Health Surveillance\(^2\). Criteria for Health Surveillance requirements are described in the Health Surveillance and Health Monitoring Guidance document, produced by Health and Safety Services.

\(^2\) Further information available on the A-Z of Health and Safety, under Health Surveillance. Health Surveillance is arranged through Health and Safety Services
i. Ensure equipment and systems provided to control exposure to hazardous substances (eg fume cabinets and biological safety cabinets), are inspected, tested and maintained as required.

j. Arrange environmental monitoring to ensure efficacy of equipment and systems, as required.

k. Ensure Assessments are reviewed if there is a reason to suspect it is no longer valid or there has been a significant change in the hazardous substances work to which it relates.

l. Ensure accidents and incidents are reported and investigated accordingly, with action taken where possible, to prevent a reoccurrence of the event.

m. Maintain records as required eg Risk / COSHH Assessments, training, inspections, equipment maintenance and servicing.

6. DUTIES OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

All staff and students working with hazardous substances as part of a College / School / Department activity must:

a. Follow all instruction and training provided to ensure the health, safety and well-being, of not only themselves when handling a substance (includes correct disposal of substance, clinical waste and associated bi-products), but also others potentially exposed.

b. Use equipment provided to minimise risks associated with the use of a substance.

c. Participate in Health Assessments as requested.

d. Inform their Supervisor, Line Manager and H&S Coordinator or directly to Health and Safety Services immediately of anything, including illnesses or medical conditions, which could affect their ability to work with a substance.

e. Report any concerns, accidents or incidents to their Supervisor, Line Manager and H&S Coordinator or directly to Health and Safety Services immediately.

7. FURTHER GUIDANCE

A range of guidance and information relating to COSHH, chemicals and other hazardous substances, safe laboratory working practices etc are available on the HSS Website:

- A – Z of Health and Safety.
- General COSHH Guidance.
- INDG135 (rev 5): Working with substances hazardous to health: A brief guide to COSHH.

8. REVIEW AND AUDIT PROCEDURES

Health and Safety Services will carry out general and periodic audits to ensure compliance against this Policy Standard and legislation in general.

Colleges / Departments must periodically review their own procedures to ensure the requirements of this Policy Standard are implemented, suitable and effective.
In addition, the University’s Health and Safety Committee may from time to time review the effectiveness of this Policy Standard.

End.