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1 UNIVERSITY POLICY FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

The University is an employer with more than five employees and is therefore obliged to construct, develop and implement a Health and Safety policy. The policy must show the management structure and the systems for ensuring the policy will work in practice.

The formal policy statement is approved by the Board of Governors; in addition the policy is extended by identifying named senior members of staff from the Vice Chancellor, Deans, and Heads of Department to certain other named individuals together with their duties and responsibilities.

2 ORGANISATION AND ARRANGEMENTS

Local responsibility for health and safety is the management organisation system used for health and safety within the University. Deans are responsible for health and safety within their particular Faculty. Heads of Department, Schools, Divisions, Units and Areas are responsible for health and safety within their respective departments for all staff, students and visitors.

The arrangements are the procedures that need to be in place to ensure the policy is carried out. These can be as diverse as risk assessments for genetic modification work through to basic first aid facilities. How the University consults staff on health and safety is also part of the arrangements. The University has 14 formal committees or panels where consultation on health and safety takes place. The Board of Governors have a standing health and safety item on the agenda of their Estates and Services committee meetings. Deans normally chair the site H&S panel meetings and the Personnel Director chairs the main University health and safety committee.

3 MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS ROLE

Managers and Supervisory staff have specific duties concerning the health and safety of staff they are expected to manage or supervise. These include ensuring staff are properly trained, are aware of the principal hazards and risk control systems at their place of work, know what to do in the event of an emergency and ensuring that accidents are reported.
4 EMPLOYEE’S ROLE

Employees of the University are obliged to co-operate with the University on health and safety matters, by observing safety regulations, reporting hazards and accidents, and by working in a manner that does not adversely affect their own health and safety, or the health and safety of others.

5 SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE’S ROLE

Safety representatives are appointed by a recognised trade union. They have certain functions to perform on behalf of the group of staff they have been appointed to represent. They can undertake H&S inspections, make representation to the employers on health and safety issues, and must be consulted by the University on significant changes in the work environment. They have representation rights on all of the Universities health and safety consultative bodies.

6 UNIVERSITY HEALTH AND SAFETY UNIT

The University Health and Safety Unit monitors the health and safety compliance levels and advises on all health and safety matters. There are four full time members of staff and one part time member of staff. The Unit is based at the All Saints Campus and is a branch of the Human Resources Division reporting directly to the Human Resources Director.

7 OFFICE HEALTH AND SAFETY

7.1 What is an office?

An office does not have an agreed definition, but it is normally regarded as a place of work where clerical and administrative work activities are carried out. Health and safety issues such as noise, thermal comfort, lighting and ergonomics apply to a variety of workplaces as well as offices; therefore the definition of an office should not be interpreted too narrowly.

New health and safety legislation does not make any distinction about specific workplaces. Many years ago there was specific legislation that dealt with offices and shops but this has been repealed.

However it would be impractical not to identify offices as being different from laboratories and workshops. In most offices work is of a sedentary nature and involves levels of visual and mental concentration, and very
often much of the work is carried out on display screen equipment. These can be seen as common characteristics of an office environment.

There are a number of office health and safety issues over which some control will need to be exercised. The following list of will have some bearing on the health, safety and well being of office occupants.

7.2 Legislation and Enforcement

The principal legislation concerning offices is the Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992. This legislation covers all workplaces and deals with specifics such as lighting, adequate space, toilet facilities etc. Other legislations applicable to offices are the First Aid at Work Regulations, Manual Handling Operations Regulations, Display Screen Equipment Regulations and Fire Precautions Regulations.

All H&S legislation is part of statute law, and breaches of the laws and regulations are criminal offences under the umbrella of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. Penalties for breaches of H&S legislation can now be very severe.

The University is subject to a variety of enforcement regimes e.g. Health and Safety Executive, Fire safety Officers, Petroleum Licensing Inspectors, Pollution Inspectors, Environmental Health Officers, Waste Authority Inspectors.

For offices the principal enforcement authority is the Health and Safety Executive. HSE Inspectors have wide ranging enforcement powers, including the issue of improvement and prohibition notices. Inspectors can also bring formal criminal prosecutions to the Courts if the compliance violation is serious enough to warrant such action.

7.3 Fire Precautions

All University buildings have fire alarm systems to warn occupants to leave the building in the case of fire. Many buildings have smoke and heat detection systems that will automatically trigger the alarm system, giving early warning of a possible fire. University buildings are divided into fire protection compartments providing at least 1/2-hour protection from a fire. Fire compartmentation will only work if the fire doors that protect the integrity of the compartments are closed, and not wedged open.

Once a fire takes a hold it will continue to develop as long as there are fuels and oxygen to support combustion. This is why it is so important not to have easily combustible materials in escape routes, and unnecessary
stored combustible materials such as paper, cardboard, or plastics in offices and storerooms. The heat from a well established fire can reach 3000 Centigrade, and smoke from fires is often extremely toxic, containing gases such as Hydrogen Cyanide. Any flammable office materials should be stored in appropriate flammables containers and volumes kept to a minimum.

The principal causes of fires in buildings are smoking and electrical hazards. Smoking shall not be permitted in any university building or vehicle. There are designated smoking areas located throughout the university, if you do smoke ensure that all matches and cigarette ends are extinguished and disposed of in appropriate receptacles.

Electrical equipment should be switched off at the end of the day unless there are valid technical or operational reasons for leaving an appliance switched on. Never overload circuits, three way plug adaptors are prohibited, and multi-way extension leads should only be used after consulting Estates Planning Services electrical staff.

7.4 Emergencies

If you discover a fire sound the alarm by breaking the glass in one of the Fire Alarm call points, they are situated on every floor, and can also be found near exit doors. Phone the emergency number immediately from the nearest phone and give the Fire brigade the correct name and address of the building. The emergency services have all been provided with the names and addresses of all University buildings. If you have time phone the faculty or building Security staff or University switchboard on 2000, the operators are trained to assist you.

In the event of fire or alarm all occupants must follow the procedures shown on the Fire Action Notices displayed by all building exits. The procedures are also laid down in Faculty Emergency Procedures booklets. Know your way out of the building, and remember it may not be possible to exit the way you came in, so become familiar with alternative exit routes. Whenever you evacuate a building make your way to the Assembly point shown on the fire action notices, and wait for permission to re-enter the building, or other instructions that may be given.

7.5 Electrical Risks

The integrity and safety of the electrical installation from supply into a building to the electrical socket outlet is the responsibility of Estates Planning Services. The responsibility for the safety of equipment from the
electrical socket to equipment is normally the responsibility of the Head of Department.

This means that Heads should purchase electrical appliances and equipment from reputable suppliers, manufactured to an appropriate standard and where possible they must be CE marked. The equipment should be used correctly and not abused, there should be no unauthorised repairs and the equipment should be periodically subject to a Portable Appliance Test. Nearly 75% of electrical faults are caused by faulty leads or plugs. An occasional visual check is all that is required to identify the majority of faults. No unauthorised electrical equipment is permitted on the university’s premises.

7.6 Lighting

Offices require sufficient light to enable work to be undertaken without risks to the occupants. There are standards contained in HSE publications that offer guidance to the lighting levels in workplace environments.

The provision of adequate light can be by natural or artificial means. Where possible natural light should be utilised, but because the quality of light in this country is variable, and often poor during the autumn and winter months, there is a great reliance on artificial means. Any artificial lighting should be fully diffused where DSE equipment is in use. The level of luminance can be measured using a suitable light meter.

The quality of light is important and a mixture of good natural light and artificial systems is the best method of providing the correct lighting level. It is also important that the direction of natural light can be controlled to ensure an absence of reflections on the DSE screens.

7.7 Ventilation/Air Quality

Ventilation refers to the rate of exchange of air in a specified area of a building. This usually expressed in the number of air changes in a given time. Many office buildings use re-circulating air systems to provide ventilation. Suitable air filtering systems are required to ensure the quality level of the re-circulated air.

The purpose of ventilation is to provide occupants with an acceptable quality of inhaled air, and to remove or dilute airborne contamination. Do not confuse ventilation with air conditioning, which is designed to provide air at the temperature and humidity required for thermal comfort.
7.8 Temperature

Thermal comfort is subjective but describes an individual's satisfaction with their temperature environment. There are a number of factors that can affect thermal comfort including air movement, humidity, type and amount of clothing worn, and the type of work being undertaken.

The temperature in workrooms should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius unless much of the work involves severe physical effort in which case the temperature should be at least 13 degrees Celsius. These temperatures may not however ensure reasonable comfort depending on other factors such as air movement and relative humidity. These temperatures refer to readings taken using a dry bulb thermometer close to the work station at working height and away from the windows. If you feel that you have a problem with the temperature within your office please contact the help desk on ext 2882.

7.9 Adequate Space to Work

There is a legal minimum volumetric space requirement of 11m$^3$ for persons who habitually occupy one workroom. This measurement does not take into account furniture and fittings, these must be assessed separately. This does not mean that each person must have 11m$^3$ allocated on an individual basis, but it does mean that if three people are habitually occupy an office then the minimum volumetric requirement must be 33m$^3$. An assessment of doorways, walkways, access to equipment, means of escape and storage must be undertaken when determining an office space and layout.

7.10 Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is not new and has always been part of working life. Identifying how to undertake a task without incurring harm or damage is a risk assessment. This methodology has been called many things in the past e.g. system of work, safe working procedure, local rules, method of work. As long as the significant hazards of any activity have been assessed, the risks identified and risk control precautions implemented, then the obligation has been satisfied.

A number of generic risk assessments have been constructed in respect of office based activities, these should be available from your departmental office.
7.11 Machinery

There are a number of machines that are commonly used in an office environment that could cause harm if used incorrectly or are poorly maintained. Apart from the electrical safety requirements that were discussed in 7.5 there are other hazards which could be present.

Photocopiers are essential office machines that use electrical, electronic and mechanical parts to work. Unauthorised repairs or servicing from an untrained person could create unnecessary risks and should not be permitted. Office staff should only carry out basic functions recommended by the machine supplier, such as changing toner cartridges, unless properly trained. Laser printers emit ozone during the printing process and this is controlled by suitable filtering. Measurements of ozone from laser printers within the University have shown that there should be no risk to any person’s health. All office machines should be subject to a regular service and maintenance contract to ensure that machines are cleaned internally, filters are changed, and safety is maintained.

7.12 Noise

Noise at work is controlled by legislation to prevent harm to hearing. Action levels are prescribed where an employer should instigate protective measures. These action levels would not normally be exceeded in an office. However noise can be a nuisance and a distraction if concentration is required. Office layouts can prevent unnecessary noise e.g. large photocopiers being placed in their own machines room. Desk printers are now much quieter than they were several years ago, and this has helped reduce the overall noise level in offices. Where noise is a problem then other control methods such as acoustic absorbent room dividers, or acoustic absorbent wall or ceiling tiles can be considered.

7.13 VDU's

Computer monitors, or to give them their statutory name Display Screen Equipment (DSE) are used extensively within the University. Staff who are designated users have certain rights. Designated users are entitled to have their workplace ergonomically assessed, (a list of DSE assessors can be found on the Health and Safety Units web site). The assessment will consider lighting, space, desk, layout, seating, welfare and safety etc. They are also entitled to free eye tests and the provision of appropriate corrective eyewear for DSE use.
7.14 Accident Reporting

All accidents, however small must be reported and an accident report form completed. Incidents that have not caused injury but had the potential to cause harm must also be reported, as well as incidents of ill health that are work related. This is done on the University accident report form; supervisors and managers should have supplies of these.

7.15 Manual Handling

Poor lifting and carrying technique causes injury to numerous members of staff every year. Although there are members of staff who lift objects on a daily basis as part of their employment, nearly all staff will lift some objects during their working week. Good technique is vital in preventing injury. Short courses are available within the University that will provide some basic skills, which if implemented, will help to prevent injury. If the object to be lifted is large, awkward or heavy then an assessment should be undertaken. The first part of any assessment should consider whether the object needs to lifted at all. Engineering methods e.g. lifting appliances, or trucks etc, should be considered next, if this is not possible a method for manual lifting with the assistance of other staff can be used. Many people use poor techniques and have escaped injury due to their general fitness and age. However there will be a risk of eventual injury as these conditions change. A serious back injury could cause substantial pain and be extremely debilitating.

Some tips on efficient lifting:

- Is it necessary to lift the load?
- assess the lift and decide if help is needed;
- obtain a firm grip on the load (use gloves if necessary);
- bend at the knees not from the waist;
- use your legs not your back to thrust upwards (the leg muscles were designed for power and strength)
- keep the load near to your body;
- do not twist your spine when lifting or carrying loads.

7.16 First Aid Arrangements

The University has an extensive first aid system with fully qualified first aiders on each site. This system is normally backed up with emergency first aiders who have received basic training. The fully qualified first aiders undertake an initial four days course with an examination, and must undergo a refresher course within three years.
First aiders are provided with a first aid attaché case and cover a site although their primary function is to provide cover for their own department. Notices are posted throughout a site, normally on a floor-by-floor basis, listing the names and phone numbers of first aiders.

### 7.17 Slips, Trips and Falls

The most common causes of accidents, not just in the university but in industry commerce and the service industries are slips, trips and falls. The following hints will prevent most of these type of accidents:

- **floor surfaces** - wipe up spills immediately, wear appropriate footwear, display cautionary notices during cleaning and polishing, immediately report and ensure repairs to loose carpet and any damaged floor coverings. If you feel that the floor covering in your office is damaged in any way please report it to the help desk on ext 2882.

- **chairs** - routinely inspect chairs for condition, do not use chairs for climbing;

- **electrical leads** - ensure leads do not cross walkways or workstations, change the office layout if necessary;

- **stairways** - use handrails, report defects and damages to stairs and handrails.

### 7.18 Welfare Facilities

Welfare facilities include the provision of adequate toilet and washing facilities. The facilities should be in sufficient numbers and be clean, well maintained and have adequate ventilation. Hot and cold water, soap and hand drying facilities should also be in place. The provision of suitable drinking water is also a statutory requirement.

### 7.19 Departmental Inspections

Each department is obliged to undertake a safety inspection of their workplace at least annually. The department should organise a small team to undertake the inspection. A report must be prepared and submitted to the head of department for action. A copy of the report with action taken or remedial action still required must be submitted to the Local Site Health & Safety Panel who monitor the site health and safety management systems.
Pre-prepared inspection checklists are helpful, and enable effective use of
time and resources. Where the department or area to be inspected is
extensive then the inspection should be divided into manageable sections.

7.20  Workplace Stress

The university has a stress policy that is supported by a number of
associated documents. A guide is available for all staff on dealing and
coping with stress. There are additional documents aimed at managers on
the practical implementation of the policy and how the effects of stress
should be considered during the decision making process.

University guidance notes relevant to Office safety

The University Health and Safety Policy
Health and Safety - whose responsibility is it anyway?
A practical guide for Heads of Department
University Emergency Evacuation Procedures
Guidance notes for the Evacuation of Disabled Persons
Fire Precautions and Notice Boards
Guidance notes on the Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992
Guidance notes on Departmental Inspections
Managing Manual Handling – A guide for Managers and Heads of
Department
Risk Assessment – A University Guide to practical Risk Assessment under
the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992
The University’s Policy on Smoking
Trade Union appointed Safety Representatives – A management guide for
Senior Staff
All these guides and many others are available on the University Health and Safety Unit Website at the following address;
www.mmu.ac.uk/personnel/h-s/welcomeFrame-7.htm

They can also be obtained from Marlena Flinn on 3317

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