

4.01 OHS Policy

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Rationale and Scope

The University of New England is fully committed to the provision of a safe and healthy work environment for all staff, students and visitors.

In addition, the University has an obligation to comply with relevant legislation, in particular, the (NSW) *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* and *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* which extend to staff members, students and visitors to the University.

Within this framework, the University supports meaningful and effective consultation with staff and other stakeholders. Staff input is encouraged and incorporated into the decision-making processes regarding health and safety matters.

The University observes the relevant *WorkCover Codes of Practice*, which must be followed unless a better way is documented and adopted. The University has also adopted the safety principles and practices as set out in AS/NZ4804 *Occupational Health and Management Systems - General guidelines on principles, systems and supporting techniques* and, where appropriate, the NOHSC standards.

In order to fulfil its commitment and obligations and provide guidance on strategic direction and implementation, a “risk management” approach has been adopted within the Occupational Health & Safety Management System (OHSMS). The University also has an OHS operational plan, which is continually reviewed and updated.

Individual policies covering specific OHS issues exist separately.

Principles and Practices

The University will promote a proactive approach to health and safety. The University will achieve this by strict attention to all aspects of occupational health and safety through:

- risk management principles
- structures and processes to ensure effective OHS consultation

- clear delegation of occupational health and safety responsibilities and accountabilities;
- positive and consistent role modelling of good occupational health and safety practice at all levels;
- provision of an adequate, responsible financial budget for OHS requirements;
- provision of training;
- written operational and maintenance records and procedures; and
- rehabilitation and counselling, where necessary.

Policy

4.01.01 Ultimately, OHS is everyone's responsibility; therefore all people in the University have a duty of care to ensure the safety of themselves and others.

4.01.02 Nevertheless, the Vice Chancellor has overall responsibility and accountability for occupational health and safety matters.

4.01.03 Within their respective areas, accountability for OHS risk management matters is then delegated to Heads of Cost Centres.

4.01.04 Within each Cost Centre, Heads of Schools and Managers are accountable for ensuring OHS legislative compliance within their areas unless OHS functions have been formally delegated.

4.01.05 In certain areas around campus, there are also other identified "persons in control" who have specific safety accountabilities as outlined in their Position Statements or other role description documentation.

Staff responsibilities

Vice-Chancellor

4.01.06 The Vice-Chancellor has ultimate responsibility for occupational health and safety management. This responsibility includes demonstrating a commitment to safety, ensuring that staff are able to meet their obligations through the provision of adequate budgets, the allocation of resources, availability of health and safety guidelines and the establishment and functioning of the OHS consultation system.

Senior Executive

4.01.07 Each member of the Executive has the delegated accountability for assisting the Vice-Chancellor in the overall implementation of and compliance with the University's OHS policies. Where necessary,

members of Executive will advise the Vice-Chancellor of occupational health and safety implications of activities in areas under their control.

4.01.08 Senior Executive staff will:

- have a responsibility to provide and maintain a safe and healthy working environment and work practices through strategic planning and final decisions that determine the staffing levels, access to consultants and finances devoted to health and safety;
- provide support and guidance in the management of occupational health and safety to those whom they supervise;
- demonstrate an understanding and commitment to occupational health and safety;
- support the OHS consultation and management processes of the University; and
- delegate occupational health and safety responsibilities to identified persons who will be accountable for compliance.

Heads of Cost Centres

4.01.09 Heads of Cost Centres are accountable for ensuring that relevant safety standards and procedures are implemented, reviewed, maintained and adhered to within their area of responsibility by the provision of safety equipment, safe systems of work, information, instruction, training and supervision, and through consultation with staff.

4.01.10 Such accountability will include determining priorities within the Cost Centre budget. Where a hazard cannot be controlled within that budget and is assessed as presenting a “high risk”, (see Risk management policy), the Head is responsible for alerting the Senior Executive.

4.01.11 Heads of Cost Centres will be expected to show commitment by example, use effective safety promotion techniques and develop positive performance indicators to measure OHS performance.

Managers/Supervisors

4.01.12 Each Manager/Supervisor has an obligation to take all practical measures possible to ensure that the work environment under their control is safe and without risk to health by ensuring that:

- substances are used properly and plant/equipment is in safe working order and is maintained to a high standard;
- information, induction and on-the-job safety training is provided and that safe working procedures are clearly understood and consistently observed; and
- staff follow instructions and do not put others at risk.

- 4.01.13** All Managers/Supervisors must ensure that the University's policies and procedures relating to health and safety are applied in relation to the responsibilities of their position and that a risk management approach is used to ensure the adequate control of risk.
- 4.01.14** The Manager/Supervisor is also responsible for consulting with staff and monitoring the workplace to identify any unsafe or unhealthy conditions or behaviour. Where they do not have the necessary authority to fix a problem, they must report the matter promptly, together with any recommendations for remedial action to the Head of the relevant Cost Centre.
- 4.01.15** In particular, Manager/Supervisors are responsible for incident management (see section **4.05**), which includes:
- reporting incidents and dangerous occurrences to the OHS Officer within 24 hours; and
 - emergency procedures and initial incident investigation and control.

Staff

- 4.01.16** All staff must be aware of the University's policies relating to health and safety as they apply to their position.
- 4.01.17** Staff are required to comply with the University's health and safety policies, procedures and instructions to ensure their own health and safety and the health and safety of others at the University. All staff are also required to take corrective action to eliminate hazards at the workplace, or report those beyond their control to their immediate supervisor.
- 4.01.18** All staff must:
- report to their immediate supervisor any situation which they have reason to believe could present a risk;
 - report any "accident" or injury to health which arises on University property or as a result of a University activity;
 - use equipment appropriately and not interfere or misuse anything provided for their safety;
 - co-operate with management by following instructions and wearing protective clothing or equipment if it is provided and they have been instructed in its use; and
 - ensure that they do not hinder the provision of assistance to an injured worker.

Contractors and sub contractors

- 4.01.19** All contractors and subcontractors engaged to perform work on the University's premises or locations will, as part of their contract, comply

with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* and *OHS Regulation 2001* and any specified health and safety policies and procedures of the University.

- 4.01.20** Where the University engages contractors, any formal contract must include the requirement that the contractor's employees are provided with site-specific safety information and that workers observe directions from the Principal Contractor.

Students

- 4.01.21** All members of the University community have a duty to care for their personal welfare and the welfare of others. To meet this commitment each person must follow instructions and safe working procedures at all times, and take all reasonable care to prevent personal injury or injury to others. They must report to University staff any incidents and dangerous occurrences which affect or are likely to affect their safety or the safety of others.

Visitors and others

- 4.01.22** All persons have OHS responsibilities and a duty of care to others. In the same way that we expect visitors to exercise reasonable care, the University is responsible for providing a safe environment for everyone.

Consultation process

- 4.01.23** The OHS Strategic Committee (see Section **4.02**) will be the consultation mechanism through which broader or more strategic health and safety aspects of all University workplaces are monitored and reviewed, and to which escalates all issues unresolved at the lower level.
- 4.01.24** The OHS Working Groups (see Section **4.03**) will be the consultation mechanism used to identify and resolve the day-to-day local safety issues, and to escalate unresolved safety issues to a higher level.
- 4.01.25** The OHS representatives on each Working Group will work in conjunction with the relevant supervisors in their areas to ensure that the health and safety concerns of staff are communicated and resolved at a local level.

Planning, design and operation

- 4.01.26** Tender documentation will require all suppliers and contractors to comply with NSW OHS legislative requirements and relevant Australian or other safety standards (see D04/8007 UNE Design standards).
- 4.01.27** Facilities Management Services (FMS) must be notified of all construction work prior to commencement of the works.

- 4.01.28** A documented risk management process must be used for all activities which have the potential to cause serious injury or illness (see D05/1690 Risk Management Policy).
- 4.01.29** The University will ensure that arrangements have been made for first aid, evacuation in the event of an emergency and disaster response including emergency communications.
- 4.01.30** Purchasers of new equipment need to work within the UNE purchasing guidelines to ensure that equipment meets the required standard and has instructions to ensure safe use.

Built Environment Infrastructure

- 4.01.31** Individual Cost Centres are responsible for ensuring the safety and maintenance of allocated buildings, office space, laboratories, equipment, and plant to acceptable safety standards.
- 4.01.32** Facilities Management Services are responsible for the safe design and maintenance of common areas, structures and general space that are not under the control of a particular Cost Centre.

Finance

- 4.01.33** The University management has a responsibility to ensure adequate funding is available for identified OHS needs, such as the elimination of hazards, development of procedures, accident prevention measures, reporting procedures, training, educational and rehabilitation programs for injured staff and the provision of a safe and healthy work/study environment.
- 4.01.34** It is acknowledged that maintaining a safe workplace is an ongoing activity, and as such cannot be achieved at once. Therefore, the resolution of outstanding OHS issues will be planned according to urgency and priority within the University's budget.

Training

- 4.01.35** Basic OHS information must be provided to all new staff as part of their induction program.
- 4.01.36** Supervisors must ensure that on-the-job instruction, safety information and on-going training are provided for staff to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge required to perform their work safely.
- 4.01.37** OHS Consultation training will be provided for all OHS Committee members and OHS Representatives.

- 4.01.38** All staff (except trainees under the supervision of qualified staff) requiring WorkCover certificates of competency must complete a recognised course of training prior to commencing work

Reporting Incidents in the Workplace

- 4.01.39** All staff are required to report incidents, dangerous occurrences or “near hits” to the Occupational Health and Safety Officer. Any staff member who is informed by a student or visitor of such an incident should either advise them to report to Safety & Security, or report the incident to the OHS Unit.
- 4.01.40** An *Incident Report Form 4.05a* must be completed within 24 hours of the event occurring.

Workers Compensation/Rehabilitation

- 4.01.41** Where an incident has resulted in a compensable injury, the injured worker/s must report the injury/injuries to their supervisor as soon as practicable.
- 4.01.42** Workers claiming Workers Compensation (see Section **4.09**) must complete a WorkCover *Workers Compensation Form* and obtain a *WorkCover Medical Certificate* from their medical practitioner.
- 4.01.43** The University will take proactive measures to devise a suitable “Return to Work Plan” (see Section **4.10**), and facilitate the early return to work of injured staff members.

References

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000

Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001

AS/NZS 4804 Occupational Health & Management Systems - General guidelines on principles, systems and supporting techniques – Standards Australia

Further Information

Occupational Health and Safety Unit ext 3232