



Circular on Online training relating to work which includes potential for exposure to laboratory animal allergens

To: All Heads of Schools in the Colleges of M&VM and S&E

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Dear Colleague

Online training relating to work which includes potential for exposure to laboratory animal allergens

In the wake of the initial phase of the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) ongoing intervention relating to three diagnosed cases of occupational asthma in the CM&VM, a number of strands of positive compliance activity have been moving forward in parallel, over the last two years or so.

The enforcement action so far taken by HSE, namely the issue of two Improvement Notices which have been appealed by the University, and are currently sisted (suspended), contain some positive and valuable parts, and some sections with which the University strongly disagrees. The initial assumption, that the University's appeal would be relatively quickly resolved and the enforcement situation clarified, has proved not to be the case.

Recommendations were made by HSE in one of the Notices, which relate to the training of personnel in a particular location within the University. These points were actioned, as if the Notice was in force, at the relevant location, in anticipation of the expected resolution of the appeal process. One upshot of this work was the creation of an online training course (on Blackboard Learn) for managers and individuals in research groups whose work involves potential exposure to animal allergens, in this case laboratory animal allergens, both within and outside a CBS facility.

At its meeting on 20th August 2014, the Central Management Group (CMG) considered this issue, and gave its full backing to the creation and delivery of mandatory training for this area of activity, initially at the location of the original HSE intervention, to be followed by rolling out the availability of the online course to all relevant areas of the University.

The online course has now been successfully piloted by Biomedical Sciences in the Edinburgh Medical School, with all relevant candidates identified, required to participate in the online course, and their participation and performance in the online competence assessment test tracked, and appropriate records kept. Now that this

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online course has been created and successfully implemented on a pilot basis, we can move forward to roll the training out to other relevant areas.

The course has 3 elements – 1. health and safety for Research Group Leaders (RGLs) / Principal Investigators (PIs) / managers / supervisors; 2. occupational health and laboratory animal allergens exposure; 3. respiratory protection equipment in relation to occupational hygiene. Working through the whole online course should take around 1.5 hours, though this does not need to be at one sitting! The pass mark in the assessment section is 100%, though candidates may retake the assessment as often as required, after referring back to the course materials.

The target audience for participation is Research Group Leaders, Principal Investigators and other relevant managers and supervisors who themselves are potentially exposed to animal allergens, and/or whose group members, or other relevant colleagues, would expect to have a similar potential for exposure, and all their staff/researchers in their groups.

This roll out has been successfully achieved at Biomedical Sciences, with valuable learning accrued relating to general teething and technical issues etc., and I'm sure that Gina Browse (CM&VM Health and Safety Manager for the Central Area), Janet Philp (BMS School Administrator) and if need be Mike Shipston (Head of BMS) would be happy to give you the benefit of their own experience. Biomedical Sciences have also produced a template communication to relevant staff, pointing out the mandatory nature of this training, and indicating their own control measures to ensure compliance – a copy of this template communication is available on request.

Action requested

This is being sent to you to ask you to set in train, with the help of your local School Health and Safety Manager/Adviser and Director of Professional Services/School Administrator, the identification of the cohort of people for your own area who should undertake the course and pass the competence assessment. Also to set up a system for tracking candidates through the online course, to progress the rollout of this online training to relevant individuals within your School (or equivalent), and to maintain appropriate training records.

Once identified, please email to safetylearning@ed.ac.uk the name of the person(s) who will be administering the courses for your School to enable us to set them up with the appropriate access on Learn and to assist them in the management of rolling out the courses.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Yours sincerely



Alastair Reid
Director of Health and Safety