



Handbook for School (Area) Safety Advisers

Introduction

This guidance will assist School (Area) Safety Advisers, henceforth referred to as School Safety Advisers, to fulfil their duties as defined in the University Health and Safety Policy and outlined below.

A School Safety Adviser must be appointed by each Head of School (or Support Service) to take a special interest in the promotion of health and safety matters, to provide a first level of advice and to act on behalf of the Head of School in respect of these matters. The Head of School will automatically assume the role of the School Safety Adviser, by default, if a formal appointment is not made.

As and when appropriate, Heads of School may require to appoint other persons concerned with the implementation of the local health and safety policy, at School level or below, from amongst, but not exclusively, the following list:

- Radiation Protection Supervisor
- Laser Supervisor
- Biological Safety Adviser
- GM Biological Safety Officer
- First Aiders
- Fire Stewards

Legal aspects

Heads of School are required to appoint a School Safety Adviser from amongst the School staff. There is no legal requirement for this appointment to be made, unlike that of School Radiation Supervisor. It is, however, a University Court requirement that all Schools must appoint, or arrange access to, a School Safety Adviser. Additional local Safety Advisers must be appointed below School level, where required, to ensure that smaller management units within Schools are effectively served in this regard. No formal qualifications or standards of training for Health and Safety Advisers have yet been set down in any of the relevant legislation. Appropriate training, to assist School Safety Advisers to understand and perform their role and functions within their own Schools, is available from the Health and Safety Department, see below.

All individual employees have responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act, to complement the responsibilities placed upon employers. As such, an act of negligence could conceivably lead to a personal prosecution, but this is much less common than prosecution of the "body corporate".

In the case of School Safety Advisers, as long as they discharge the duties given to them by their Head of School in a sensible and responsible fashion, there is even less likelihood of action being taken against them as an individual, under the criminal



law, as Health and Safety Executive perceive such safety personnel as working towards the same goals as themselves, i.e. the promotion of health and safety in the workplace, and so attempting to "punish" such an individual as counterproductive.

In the normal course of events then, individual action under the criminal law against a School Safety Adviser is highly unlikely. However, no individual can expect immunity from the law should they commit an act of gross (probably bordering on wilful) negligence, and in this respect School Safety Advisers are in the same position as any other individual employee.

As far as the civil law goes, any acts of negligence by any individual employee, including School Safety Advisers, are covered by the concept of vicarious liability. This means that, so long as the activity in question was part of the normal activities of the University, and the individual was therefore acting within the course of their employment, liability passes upwards to the employer, who must hold Employer's Liability Insurance to cover such events. In such instances, no financial penalty will fall to the individual employee.

Model duties

The School Safety Adviser is concerned with the day-to-day safety organisation within their School or building. Primary tasks are to advise and assist the Head of School in the management of all health and safety matters and liaise between the School and the Director of Health and Safety and the other staff of the Health and Safety Department. The School Safety Adviser will normally be a senior member of the academic, administrative or technical staff who has gained a wide experience and a sound understanding of the work carried out in their School. School Safety Advisers will require sufficient time and resources to discharge their duties efficiently and should have the expertise necessary and the authority to perform these duties. The School Safety Adviser has no statutory obligations specifically laid upon them, but should act as a focus for the flow of health and safety information to, from and within their School.

In large Schools the duties may be carried out by a number of employees, nominated by the Head of School) and these are referred to as Local Safety Advisers. The School Safety Adviser should monitor that the duties of Local Safety Advisers are being carried out satisfactorily and should co-ordinate the efforts within the School.

Many areas with high risks have appointed professional Health and Safety Managers/Advisers. Their main responsibility is to oversee the health and safety of their particular College, School or campus, as applicable. Their duties, therefore, will extend beyond the 'voluntary' School Safety Adviser role and this will be communicated within each particular College, School or work area by the Head of College, School or work area.



The duties of the School Safety Adviser should include:

- 1) Being fully familiar with the relevant parts of the University Health and Safety Policy and with the School health and safety policy(s).
- 2) Providing advice to members of the School on matters of occupational health and safety and in particular advising the Head of School on the formulation and revision of School health and safety policy procedures.
- 3) Acting with the delegated authority of the Head of School in matters of urgency.
- 4) Referring promptly to the Head of School or the University's Director of Health and Safety any health and safety problems which cannot be resolved locally on a time scale commensurate with the risk.
- 5) Liaising with the University's Director of Health and Safety and other corporate Health and Safety Department staff for health and safety matters.
- 6) Attending meetings of the School health and safety committee.
- 7) Ensuring that accidents, near misses and instances of occupational ill health are reported to Health and Safety Department.
- 8) Conducting or co-ordinating systematic health and safety inspections and accident investigations (with Safety Representatives of the recognised Trade Unions having employees working in the School if applicable), to identify unsafe or unhealthy conditions or work practices, and monitoring that preventative action is recommended and actioned.
- 9) Disseminating health and safety information and reports to appropriate members of School staff and students.
- 10) Ensuring that new members of the School receive adequate induction with respect to health and safety matters.
- 11) Assist manager (PI's etc.) in identifying members of the School for appropriate:
 - health and safety training events;
 - occupational health/medical surveillance; and
 - liaison with other internal or external health and safety specialists.
- 12) Ensuring that effective liaison is maintained with the University Fire Safety Adviser, in particular ensuring that:
 - suitable and sufficient Fire Stewards are appointed to cover the School's accommodation;



- the Fire Alarm system serving the School or building is properly tested on a weekly basis;
- Aspects of fire safety relating to the occupation of a [Multi-occupancy Building](#) (MoB) are fully complied with, where relevant.

13) Monitoring in the School that:

- a high standard of housekeeping is maintained;
- adequate precautions are taken regarding any special existing or new hazard;
- adequate precautions are taken regarding any changes to be made;
- plant, equipment and processes are being maintained as required by any relevant statutory provisions;
- staff and students are suitably informed, instructed and trained;
- adequate health and safety records are maintained where appropriate, i.e. as required by relevant statutory provisions or by University or School health and safety policy;
- safe working practices and procedures, together with any necessary risk assessments for project work, are complied with;
- personal protective equipment needs are assessed and that sufficient suitable personal equipment is available and used;
- systems are set up and maintained to check that health and safety facilities such as first-aid boxes, firefighting equipment, etc. are provided and maintained in a readily usable condition; and
- other aspects that legislation or University/School policy may dictate are catered for.

14) Reviewing periodically health and safety procedures within the School.

15) Such other health and safety duties that may be assigned by the Head of School.

These duties will only occupy a part of the time of the person concerned, but the Head of School should ensure that sufficient resources, in terms of time, finance and space are allocated to enable the School Safety Adviser concerned to function efficiently and effectively.

Heads of School, and by their delegated authority, Heads of Management Units below School level, will inevitably require to ensure that suitable persons are appointed in Divisions, Departments, Centres, Units, etc., to assist with the management of health and safety within those areas. School Safety Advisers will require to ensure that a suitable network of such persons is in place, to ensure effective communication, dissemination of information, etc., both upwards and downwards, and also sideways between different management units within the same School.



Contacts for further advice

The professional staff of the Health and Safety Department provide a source of independent and objective expert advice to the University on the full range of occupational health, safety and welfare matters, as well as providing a central co-ordinating role in securing the effective implementation of the University Health and Safety Policy. The Director of the Department is responsible to the University Court via the Director of Corporate Services, who is also the Convener of the University Safety, Health and Wellbeing Committee.

Liaison with the various authorities who enforce the statutory requirements for health and safety takes place through the Health and Safety Department.

Anyone is free to contact directly any of the sections of the Health and Safety Department, as [listed on the Health and Safety website](#).

The Health and Safety Department e-mail address is Health.Safety@ed.ac.uk and individual members of the Health and Safety Department are also on the University e-mail system.

Each subject specific Unit also has their own website with a variety of codes of practice and guidance documents, as follows:

- [General, occupational hygiene and training](#)
- [Biological safety](#)
- [Fire safety](#)
- [Occupational health](#)
- [Radiation protection](#)

Contact with Enforcing Authorities

Liaison with the various authorities who enforce the statutory requirements for health and safety takes place through the Health and Safety Department. If you are contacted directly, please either refer them to the appropriate member of staff in the corporate Health and Safety Department in the first instance, or ensure that the corporate Health and Safety Department are made aware of this contact as soon as possible.

University Health and Safety Policy

School Safety Advisers should be familiar with the University Health and Safety Policy. The Health and Safety Policy is issued upon the authority of the University Court. It is published in two documents - the [University Health and Safety Policy and a Framework](#) document also divided into two - Organisation and Arrangements, the full texts of which are available online.

The University Health and Safety Policy is available in both electronic and printed booklet forms. Hard copy print outs of sections of the Policy can be supplied by the



Health and Safety Department to people who do not have access to the internet, on request. Contact the Health and Safety Department on 51-4255;
Health.Safety@ed.ac.uk.

School Health and Safety Policy

School Safety Advisers should be actively involved in the production, implementation, monitoring and review of School policies and procedures. The production, implementation, monitoring and review of School health and safety documentation should involve key senior School personnel.

It is a requirement of the University Court that all Schools, institutes, centres, etc. are required to prepare and issue statements of School health and safety policy, which will complement the University Health and Safety Policy, and which will highlight local hazards, controls, procedures etc., relevant to the particular School, etc. The School health and safety policy document should be signed by the Head of School and bear its date of issue, and review date. It is recommended that the School Health and Safety Policy should be reviewed at least every five years, or sooner if there are material changes in practices or structure. A [template Health and Safety Policy](#) for low risk areas is available on the Health and Safety Department website.

School Health and Safety Committees

[School Health and Safety Committees](#) must be appointed by Heads of School whenever justified by the nature and extent of risks. This committee should consist of an appropriate number of persons, so that the main groups of staff, and Trade Union Safety Representatives (if appointed) are represented. Where appropriate there should also be student representation.

The School Health and Safety Committee should promote a positive attitude to health and safety amongst staff and students, and act as a focus for observations on, and problems with, standards of health and safety, so that these can be referred to the School Safety Adviser or other person responsible.

The School Health and Safety Committee should ensure that regular School inspections are carried out in order to identify the hazards and risks associated with School activities, and establish that these are being adequately controlled, or set in motion remedial measures. It is strongly recommended that the Head of School should attend at least one inspection exercise or meeting of the School Health and Safety Committee each year, though there is no requirement for the Head of School to convene this committee.

In Schools where risks are low, and the appointment of a School Health and Safety Committee is not justified, health and safety should be a standing item on the agenda of School management meetings.



Accidents, Incident and Dangerous Occurrences

All accidents, fires and dangerous occurrences including near misses must be reported to the Health and Safety Department as soon as possible after the incident has occurred, and in any case within seven days, so that the requirements of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) may be met. No accident should be considered too trivial to report.

Large and/or geographically diverse Schools must ensure that they have in place robust internal reporting procedures, to ensure that all incidents/accidents are reported via the University Accident and Incident system.

All accidents etc. reported using the [University Accident and Incident reporting system](#) will be reviewed and investigated as necessary by the Health and Safety Department. All accidents and incidents must also be reviewed at School level and most accidents etc. should also [be investigated by the School Safety Adviser](#) or other nominated member of staff.

The University's [online Accident and Incident reporting system](#) (known as AIR) can be found online. Serious accidents should be reported to the Health and Safety Department via telephone/Teams message and subsequently followed up by the submission of an online accident and incident form.

Occupational Ill Health

[Instances of occupational ill health](#) should be reported following the process detailed on the Occupational Health website.

The School Safety Adviser should also help identify, in conjunction with PIs/Research Group Leaders/Supervisors, members of the School who require occupational health/medical surveillance and liaise with the Occupational Health Service over any necessary arrangements.

Occupational Health Service

The Occupational Health Service is a part of the Health and Safety Department, but provides a professional service which is totally independent, impartial and completely confidential. The professional staff in the Service will provide advice on the effects of work upon health and health upon work. Contact the Occupational Health Service at Occupational.Health@ed.ac.uk or see their [website](#).

Health and Safety Inspections

[Safety inspection checklists](#) are available on the Health and Safety Department Web site. These are designed to assist Schools carry out health and safety inspections. Available checklists include:

- Chemical / Biological Laboratories Checklist
- Fire Stewards Weekly Checklist



- Health and Safety Plan
- Low Risk Model Self Inspection Checklist
- Low Risk Model Safety Rules
- Mechanical Workshop Checklist
- Office Accommodation Self Inspection Checklist
- School Health and Safety Induction Checklist / Guidance

Training

Induction

All new members of a School must receive adequate instruction with respect to health and safety matters. This will include emergency procedures (fire, first-aid), information with regard to specific hazards relating to their particular work activity or area, procedures for reporting any health and safety concern and any other relevant health and safety information. [Guidance on School induction training](#) is available online.

School Safety Adviser Training

The Health and Safety Department has produced a [specific training course specifically aimed at School Safety Advisers](#). We strongly encourage all School Safety Advisers to complete this course.

Identifying Training Needs

School Safety Advisers are required to monitor to ensure that staff and students are receiving suitable and adequate training. Internal training courses/events are organised throughout the year, or are available online through the LEARN platform, by the Health and Safety Department, Learning and Organisation Development and Human Resources. These courses will be widely advertised and Schools should identify appropriate members of the School who should attend.

An indicative list of what [health and safety training is required](#), is available online.

Schools should identify their own training needs and seek to provide additional training where necessary. The Health and Safety Department may be able to organise relevant courses or provide details of external organisations able to assist with health and safety training.

Online training

The Health and Safety Department has produced or procured a [variety of training courses available online](#).

Handover arrangements

When staff leave the University or move positions, a [suitable handover](#) must be arranged to ensure all pertinent safety information is passed to the School or new



incumbent. The School Safety Adviser should implement a system locally to ensure such a handover occurs.

Fire safety

The University Fire Safety Adviser is responsible for ensuring fire risk assessments are carried out in University buildings. Reports of these assessments are forwarded to the Head of School for information and action where necessary.

Schools are responsible for assessing the fire risks arising out of School work activities, equipment, etc. and putting in place any necessary control measures. Schools must also ensure suitable systems are in place for the safe evacuation of School personnel by appointing sufficient Fire Stewards to cover the School's accommodation and by ensuring individuals are fully conversant with the evacuation procedure, fire assembly muster point, etc. The School Safety Adviser is normally responsible for ensuring the School's fire alarm system is tested on a weekly basis where required.

Advice and assistance on fire safety can be obtained from the University Fire Safety Adviser (Fire@ed.ac.uk).

Risk Assessments

There is a legal requirement on employers to assess all risks involved in their work activities. Where there is a significant risk the results of this assessment must be recorded. School Safety Advisers are not necessarily expected to carry out School risk assessments themselves but it is anticipated they will co-ordinate and oversee the implementation of risk assessments throughout the School. Further guidance on the [requirements and process of risk assessment](#) is available online as well as in the [online Risk Assessment course](#). A [variety of model and generic risk assessments](#) are available online.

Monitoring health and safety

The implementation of the School Health and Safety Policy can be most usefully monitored by [regular inspection](#) at School level. A record of each inspection and subsequent remedial action should be kept, and should be available for scrutiny by the Director of Health and Safety, Trade Union Safety Representatives, the Health and Safety Executive and Insurance/Brokers Inspectors. School Safety Advisers are responsible for assisting the Head of School to ensure that suitable monitoring and inspections take place and that remedial measures are actioned.

Personal Protective Equipment

School Safety Advisers should assist staff, e.g. Research Group Leaders, to assess the [personal protective equipment](#) needs of the members of the School and ensure that sufficient personal equipment is available, used and suitably maintained.



The issue of personal protective equipment, other than normal protective clothing and eye protection, should be considered appropriate only for short term or emergency situations. Every effort should be made either to eliminate the process giving rise to the hazard, or to reorganise the operation so that the hazard is controlled at source. Where this is not possible, personal protective equipment should be issued only after it has been positively assessed as being suitable for coping with the hazard.

Every person provided with personal protective equipment must take reasonable care of such equipment and must make proper use of it when there is a foreseeable risk of injury. Persons must also be instructed on how to use and maintain the equipment with which they are issued.

Information and communication

Up-to-date information and guidance on health and safety issues can be found on the [Health and Safety Department Web site](#) as well as via email and the [Health and Safety Department blog](#). All School Safety Advisers will also be added to the [MS Team](#).

Information relevant to School health and safety management must be disseminated to personnel within the School. This will include risk assessments, COSHH assessments, minutes of safety committees, inspection reports, etc.

Record keeping

School Safety Advisers should ensure that adequate health and safety records are maintained. This will include records of statutory tests (i.e. local exhaust ventilation tests required under COSHH, pressure vessels, lifting equipment, etc.), records of training, inspections and resultant actions taken and any other records relating to health and safety deemed necessary by the School. These records should be kept and should be available for scrutiny by the Director of Health and Safety, Trade Union Safety Representatives and the Health and Safety Executive and Insurers/Brokers Inspectors.

Please note, the record keeping for Estates managed and tested equipment does not fall under the responsibility of the School. Estates will manage these records centrally.



Document version

Version number	Summary of change	Date and by whom
1.0	Original document	2004
1.1	Second edition – minor changes	2010
1.2	Third edition – minor changes	2023 C Schmid

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact The Health and Safety Department on health.safety@ed.ac.uk or call (0131) 651 4255