

**School of Life Sciences  
Health and Safety Management Committee Meeting  
14<sup>th</sup> April 2005**

**Present**

Professor CP Downes (CPD; Chair), Professor DA Cantrell (DAC), Professor DG Hardie (DGH), Professor JJ Blow (JJB), Dr C Halpin (CH), Dr MEM Benwell (MEMB), Dr WGF Whitfield (WGF), Ms G Alexander (GA), Dr JA Chudek (JAC), Mrs M Lacey (ML), Mrs I Blair (IB), Mr IR Leith (IRL), Ms L Grayson (LG; Minutes), Professor CJ Weijer (CJW), Dr PM Taylor (PMT), Dr EL Newman (ELN), Dr IG Scragg (IGS; Safety Services).

**Apologies**

Professor CA Tickle, Professor AH Fairlamb, Professor AI Lamond, Professor MAJ Ferguson, Professor GM Gadd, Dr J Elliott, Dr NR Helps.

**ACTION****1. Welcome to New Members**

CPD introduced DAC and DGH and welcomed them to the Committee.

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes were approved.

**Matters Arising****a) Risk Assessments for LSTU Practical Classes**

The H&S Working Group have analysed the current hardcopy risk assessments and are proposing that they be redone in a different format and entered into the Risk Assessment Database. LG has prepared an implementation plan (Paper A) detailing how this task will be tackled. The aim is to have all practical class risk assessments completed, approved and made available to the undergraduate students by the start of the 2005/2006 academic year. LG to submit plan to LSTU senior managers for their approval.

**LG****b) Signing off of Liquid Nitrogen risk assessments**

CPD informed the Committee that some LN2 facilities are still lacking a full set of current risk assessments. CPD stressed the importance of completing this task and fully complying with the HSE Inspection report. H&SWG to make this a priority over the next six months.

**H&SWG**

IRL took this opportunity to introduce the central liquid nitrogen cell storage facility planned for CIR. This will be located on the ground floor and be comprised of several auto-fill, vapour phase storage tanks and a computerised inventory system. IRL acknowledged the potential problems associated with a shared facility such as this, but feels the pros outweigh the cons and strongly recommends that PIs make use of this facility once it comes online. IRL pointed out that if the HSE were to re-inspect our LN2 facilities at any time in the future, we would be strongly criticised for keeping such large volumes of LN2 in general laboratories. The CIR facility will also remove the risks associated with manual filling and liquid phase storage. Division Heads were asked to introduce this issue at their next Divisional meeting.

**HoDs**

DAC enquired about how easy it would be to access the CIR facility outwith normal working hours. IRL assured DAC that the facility will be accessible at all times, but indicated that he would have concerns over lone working. At this point LG interjected, explaining that the acceptability of lone working will be determined by risk assessment.

DAC did not think the immunologists would be amenable to storing all their frozen cells in a remote location and suggested a compromise: retain a "working stock" in the laboratory and use the CIR facility for archiving. LG thought this was a sensible proposal.

CPD proposed this topic should be discussed at Divisional level over the next few months and revisited at the next H&SMC meeting. In the interim, IRL to market the proposed facility.

**IRL**

c) RGF Status Report

LG informed the Committee that a draft University policy has been produced by Prof Boxer and RIS. It will be finalised after the next RGF meeting on 21/4/05. It appears that SLS will not be required to set up its own "Ethics Review Board". The University Ethics Committee will deal with non-clinical projects that do not require TCMRE approval. However, there will still have to be screening at a local level to decide which projects go to which committee. LG hopes to receive further details at the meeting on 21/4. LG proposed that we do not put any local procedures into action until the University policy is officially adopted. In the interim, LG to finalise our local procedures and put some explanatory information on the H&S web site.

LG

d) SLS Risk Assessment System Progress

CPD reported that LG has emailed access instructions to all SLS personnel. LG pointed out that Lab Managers and other core support staff still require specific risk assessment training. The first training session is to be held on 27/4/05 for the LSTU technicians. The aim is for IB and LG to train all core support staff before the end of summer 2005. The process of compiling risk assessments to cover all work activities undertaken in SLS can then begin in earnest.

IB/LG

### 3. Strategic Changes to SLS H&S Management System

CPD reported that LG's investigations into measuring H&S performance had brought to light deficiencies in our current H&S Management System, particularly when it comes to organisation of staff and proper planning. LG, IRL, IB and GA have met to discuss how the current H&S management approach can be improved in order to address these failings. Details of the proposals arising from this meeting - given in Paper B - were discussed.

The proposal to divide responsibility for the key elements of the H&S Management System between LG, IB and GA was approved. LG, IB, GA and IRL to meet and finalise the details. All decisions must be clearly documented.

LG/IB/GA/IRL

CPD made it clear that both he and IRL will ensure that those with H&S management responsibilities adequately fulfil their role.

JJB and CJW did not think it would be appropriate to have a PhD and Post Doc representative on the new H&S Committee. CPD suggested the formation of the new Committee be approved with the proviso that he, GA and IRL meet to discuss and agree the final composition. All present agreed.

GA/IRL/CPD

LG to revise the H&S Policy document once all changes are finalised.

LG

### 4. Basic Training Checklist

LG informed the Committee that she anticipates problems if we go ahead with plans to make proximity card issue dependent upon submission of completed BTCs, especially in MRC/DSTT where a longer, general checklist is in use. LG also reported that although 161 new recruits have been registered in the staff database since the BTC program was launched, only 71 BTCs have been completed to date. This gives a compliance rate of only 44%. LG predicts that a 90% compliance rate could be achieved under the new scheme outlined in Paper C and asked the Committee to improve its implementation. Committee members gave their approval.

Those identified in the implementation plan are to put the system into operation immediately.

IB/GA/LG

LG to report back on the compliance rate at the next H&SMC.

LG

ML pointed out that the documentation did not clearly show the inclusion of LSTU staff in the BTC scheme. LG to amend the documentation accordingly.

LG

DAC commented that visiting workers appear to be somewhat neglected. LG said the BTC also applies to visiting workers and, on a more general note, that Janette Cordiner can arrange for working visitors to become associate members of staff. This status entitles them to all the benefits and privileges a full member of staff receives.

## 5. Percentage of Lab Manager's Time Dedicated to H&S Duties

At the previous meeting, CPD suggested 20% as a starting figure and asked Division Heads to discuss this with their PIs and report back. CPD asked for comments. JJB suggested that rather than putting a rigid, perhaps unrealistic, figure on it, H&S tasks should be given higher priority in general. IRL pointed out that the Lab Managers have a high workload and, currently, very little time to dedicate to H&S tasks, but that through more focussed time management and streamlining of other processes they should be able to dedicate more time to H&S. DGH said he viewed H&S as a Lab Manager's top priority and thought it should be formally recognised as such. JJB said he was sure all Division Heads would agree.

CPD proposed that a statement should be made to this effect and that IRL must ensure that the Lab Manager's job description clearly shows H&S duties as a top priority.

IRL

CPD stressed that commitment from all senior managers was the key to successful H&S management.

IRL wanted it made clear that encouraging the Lab Managers to dedicate more time to H&S duties should not reduce the level of service they provide to the research staff.

## 6. DSE: Problems, Priorities and a Possible Solution

LG summarised the findings of the DSE Workstation Inspection carried out on 18/1/05 (details given in Paper D) and confirmed that only the WTB writing rooms were surveyed. LG assured the Committee that although, at first glance, the situation seems poor - only 8% of the workstations checked could be classed as ideal - in most instances the problems can be easily remedied. IB/LG to initiate remedial action.

IB/LG

LG proposed that the writing rooms be re-inspected at the end of the year with a view to demonstrating a marked improvement. IB/LG to arrange.

IB/LG

IRL confirmed that the WTB writing rooms would be furnished with new, DSE friendly chairs by summer 2005.

DGH commented that the depth of the benches in the writing rooms is not adequate. IRL pointed out that using a flat screen monitor solves this problem.

The draft DSE policy included in Paper D was submitted for approval. The Committee gave its approval.

LG reported that a 20 minute DSE training video is being shown at the end of every month for the benefit of all SLS personnel using DSE as part of their job. Also, 11 core support staff attended Safety Services' DSE Assessor training course on 2/3/05 and are now primed to carry out DSE risk assessments. The H&SWG decided that the process of compiling DSE risk assessments should be phased, with WTB groups and those moving to CIR holding off until the end of summer 2005 and late 2005 respectively. In all other cases the assessment process can begin immediately. IB/LG to initiate this process.

IB/LG

IGS informed the Committee that Safety Services were working on an on-line DSE training package and agreed to make it available to SLS as a matter of priority.

IGS

## 7. Genetic Modification Issues

DGH and DAC were asked to nominate an experienced member of research staff to take on the role of BSO in their respective Divisions. Both agreed to do this. IGS asked for names to be forwarded to LG. It was noted that AHF has already selected a member of his group to replace Mark Ariyanayagam as the CL3 Suite BSO.

DAC/DGH

CPD asked CJW, as GM Committee convener, to remind the members that failure to respond promptly to a request to review an assessment can seriously delay the start of the research project. CJW agreed to this.

CJW

CPD explained the benefit of submitting Divisional notifications to HSE for Class II GM projects. This prevents each PI having to notify separately and saves a considerable amount of time, effort and expense. LG pointed out that the fee has just gone up from £691 to £829 per Class 2 notification. The Divisions of MPBC and GRE have already done this and CPD suggested that, when the need arises in other Divisions, the BSO could co-ordinate the effort and use the GRE notification as a template. CPD acknowledged Neil Perkins' efforts in co-ordinating the completion of the GRE notification.

## **8. Lone & Out-of-Hours Working, Policy & Arrangements**

CPD explained that this document (Paper E) was revised in response to WGFW putting forward proposals relating to Honours Students working outwith normal hours. LG explained the key points and asked the Committee to approve the policy and arrangements. JJB was adamant that it was not practical to do a risk assessment for every instance of lone/out-of-hours working. IGS said that this would be the ideal. CH stressed that the ability to carry out lone and out-of-hours work in safety depends very much on the individual and not just the activity, making it unreasonable to put an outright ban on the undertaking of any particular activity under lone/out-of-hours conditions. LG proposed that the standard risk assessment include a section that specifically refers to lone/out-of-hours working and that assessors make recommendations rather than simply classifying an activity as suitable or unsuitable for lone/out-of-hours working. CPD supported this approach. LG to amend the SLS Risk Assessment Database accordingly.

LG

LG stressed the fact that responsibility for the safety of lone and out-of-hours workers lies not just with the individual undertaking the work but with the line manager/supervisor who sanctions it.

JJB felt that a checklist or information sheet for lone/out-of hours workers would be useful. LG agreed and will use the appendix to the Policy as the basis for this document.

LG

It became apparent that not all personnel have been furnished with an Emergency Numbers Card. IB/LG to rectify this.

IB/LG

The shortcomings of using a signing-in book for out-of-hours workers were discussed. It was agreed that the book gives an entirely false impression of who is in the building and it would seriously mislead the Emergency Services if they were to make use of it. There was doubt as to whether the Emergency Services have ever checked the signing-in book. The Committee proposed that signing-in books should be scrapped immediately and electronic alternatives investigated. Several options, and their limitations, were discussed. The general consensus was that it will probably be impossible to find a system that produces an accurate account of who is in the building at any given time, and this raised the question as to whether it was worth pursuing. LG to ask Safety Services for advice on this issue.

LG

Committee approved the policy and arrangements subject to the agreed amendments.

## **9. Training Initiatives**

CPD summarised the attendance statistics for the H&S training video sessions held in Feb/March (Paper F). In general, attendance figures are disappointingly low especially in the research staff category. Consistently good attendance from WBRU and LSTU staff was noted. LG informed the Committee that the videos will be shown at the end of each month for the benefit of new recruits and those who could not attend the sessions in February. LG asked for suggestions on how to encourage better attendance. JJB said that delivering training on activities people carry out every day, e.g. centrifugation, is just reminding them of what they already know and is probably not of any net benefit. LG disputed this and pointed out that our track record, on centrifuge accidents in particular, shows that staff have got a lot to learn. IRL backed this.

It was noted that those willingly attending H&S training sessions are usually our most safety conscious personnel, whereas, those who do not attend are the ones who really require H&S training. This is why it is important to improve attendance across the board.

JJB had previously recommended converting the training videos to QuickTime movies that can be accessed via the web. This will allow staff to view them at a time most convenient to them. LG said there were copyright issues preventing this. JJB suggested that the H&SWG make their own training videos and offered to take a starring role as the bad example. LG and IB thanked JJB for his offer and said they had been considering making their own H&S training videos for some time

and planned to start production soon. IB and LG to take this forward.

**IB/LG**

IB pointed out that there was still a requirement to generate a record of attendance for H&S training and it was not clear how this could be achieved if the material is accessed via the web. WGFW asked IB and LG to consider using VLE (My Dundee, formerly known as Blackboard) as a platform for H&S training material. It has the facility to track file access and is ideal for training purposes. CPD commented that all Research Management Group material is now on VLE and that it would be wise to make use of the resource. LG said that, as far as she is aware, very few laboratory staff know how to access VLE, and that, prior to this meeting, even the H&SWG members were unaware that Safety Services had material on VLE. MEMB and WGFW assured LG that all SLS personnel will be able to access VLE and that it is quite simple to use. LG to see WGFW for more details on VLE.

**LG**

IGS said Safety Services would be happy to help with the production of training videos. CPD thanked IGS for this offer.

CPD advised the H&SWG not to expect 100% attendance at H&S training sessions but to keep up the good work and continue developing and delivering H&S training.

#### **10. Accident Statistics**

Paper G showed comparisons between the accident/incident statistics for 2002, 2003 and 2004. CPD explained that the marked increase over this period was undoubtedly due to better reporting of accidents/incidents rather than diminishing H&S standards. LG pointed out that because the results could be interpreted either way the statistics are useless as a performance indicator, and analysing the cause and taking action to prevent a recurrence are far more important than simply compiling the statistics. LG drew attention to the "Lessons to be Learned" page on the H&S web site. Committee members felt that this useful information would go unnoticed by most personnel. DAC thought Division Heads should be notified of any serious accidents/incidents relevant to their staff. JJB suggested using email to disseminate important findings from accident investigations. Committee approved of both suggestions. LG to implement.

**LG**

#### **11. AOCB**

DGH asked if the H&SMC meeting agenda, papers and minutes could be made available in electronic format and suggested posting them on the VLE. Committee members agreed that electronic format was preferable to hardcopy. LG to deliver H&SMC documents in electronic format from now on.

**LG**