

College of Life Sciences

Health and Safety Management Committee Meeting

3rd November 2006

Present

Professor CP Downes (CPD; Chair), Professor S Black (SB), Professor DA Cantrell (DAC), Dr J Elliott (JE), Dr C Halpin (CH; on behalf of GMG), Dr NR Helps (NRH), Dr EL Newman (ELN), Dr ND Perkins (NDP; on behalf of AIL), Dr PM Taylor (PMT; on behalf of DGH), Ms G Alexander (GA), Ms L Grayson (LG; Minutes), Mrs Gillian Jones (GJ; invited guest), Mrs M Lacey (ML), Mr IR Leith (IRL), Dr IG Scragg (IGS).

Apologies

Professor AH Fairlamb (AHF), Professor GM Gadd (GMG), Professor DG Hardie (DGH), Professor AI Lamond (AIL), Professor CJ Weijer (CJW), Mrs I Blair (IB).

ACTION

1. Welcome and Apologies

CPD welcomed everyone to the meeting and ran through the list of apologies. There was no representative from the Division of Biological Chemistry & Molecular Microbiology due to this meeting coinciding with a Wellcome Trust site visit. CPD conveyed his thanks to AHF for taking the time to read through the papers and email his comments to LG. There was no representative from the Division of Cell & Developmental Biology.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were approved.

Matters Arising

Item 2A: Feedback from Divisions on CIR Liquid Nitrogen Cell Storage Facility

IRL gave a brief summary of the progress to date and informed the Committee that three tenders are currently being considered. Once the costs are finalised the issue of how the project is financed will be discussed.

Item 2b: Strategic Changes to Health & Safety Management System

Version 6.1 of the H&S Policy was brought to the attention of all personnel via email on 30/3/06. Policy is currently being revised to reflect the new College structure.

Item 2c: Basic Training Checklist Compliance Rates

LG is still in the process of collating the data. Report will be given at the next meeting.

LG

Item 2d: New Biological Safety Officer Appointments

Dr Pete Taylor has been appointed BSO for the Division of Molecular Physiology. Liz Emslie has been appointed BSO for the Division of Cell Biology & Immunology.

Item 2e: Lone and Out-of-Hours Working

All personnel were notified of the new Lone and Out-of-Hours Working Policy by email on 27/1/06 and it is now part of the H&S Portfolio issued to all new recruits.

Item 3b: Castors on Lab Chairs [Paper B]

CPD informed the Committee that, in light of the risk assessment carried out by the H&S Working Group, he has decided to reverse his original decision and allow castors to be fitted to laboratory chairs, at the discretion of the PIs. IGS explained that Safety Services' advice was based on recognised international standards and if CLS chooses to adopt its own local standards it must take full responsibility for maintaining staff safety. There were no other objections. NDP said this decision would be greatly appreciated by the groups occupying JBC.

Item 5: Drug Precursors

All personnel were notified of the Drug Precursor Policy via email on 27/1/06. CPD informed the Committee that our first Home Office licence was in place. LG confirmed this and said it was to be commended that the PhD student doing the work recognised the chemical she was using as a drug

precursor and sought advice. This led on to discussion about how to effectively communicate H&S information to all personnel. See Item 8b, below, for further discussion on this topic. NDP asked if there could be a link from the Order Book directly to a list of controlled substances. LG to investigate. IGS stressed the importance of PIs responding to his requests for information relating to controlled substances. **LG**

Item 8b: Fire Evacuation Procedure

LG reissued the email detailing the Fire Evacuation Procedure on 27/4/06. LG felt that this example highlighted a general communication problem and asked for advice on how to effectively convey health & safety information. DAC reiterated the request for Divisional Secretaries to be directly informed of any items that should be included on Divisional meeting agendas. LG to ensure this is done from now on. NDP asked if LG could attend Divisional meetings in person. LG did not think it would be practical for her to attend every one. NDP accepted this and suggested LG could be invited to attend when necessary. NDP also asked for the minutes of this meeting to be emailed directly to every PI. LG explained that the minutes are posted on the CLS H&S Web Site and can be accessed by all CLS personnel. NDP did not think this was an effective way of communicating the minutes to the PIs. LG conceded and agreed to email the minutes directly to the PIs from now on. DAC asked if the minutes could be printed and displayed in meetings rooms. LG agreed to ask the Lab Managers to post copies on their H&S notice-boards. NDP suggested giving PIs the opportunity propose items for inclusion on the H&SMC meeting agendas. CPD explained that the route for this is via the Division Heads. **LG**
LG
LG

Item 8c: Smoking Outside CLS Buildings

CPD explained that the policy agreed at the previous meeting is being enforced but complaints about smoke coming into the building are continuing. DAC said this was a serious problem on WTB 2 south side, especially during the summer months when people want to open their office windows. DAC was of the opinion that a smoke free campus would be the ideal solution. Many Committee members agreed. NRH proposed that smokers be asked to keep a specified distance from the building. IGS pointed out that a 6 meter distance has already been specified. NRH raised the issue of smoking shelters. IGS said this has been discussed at University level but discounted. Several members of the Committee expressed their dismay at the litter left behind by smokers at the front of MSI. SB asked that, wherever the smokers end up, adequate receptacles for cigarette ends be provided. IGS noted that Ninewells is moving towards becoming an entirely smoke free zone and that the Main Campus may follow suit at some time in the future. CPD proposed that Life Sciences lead the way and declare the College a smoke free zone. The Committee supported this. CPD to raise this issue at the next College Board meeting. IGS said he would raise the smoke free Campus issue with David Duncan, University Secretary. **CPD**
IGS

3. Minutes of Health & Safety Committee Meeting and Matters Arising [Paper C]

Previous Minutes, Item 7iv: Traffic Through Labs

Members of the H&S Committee asked for clarification on what the policy is and how it is being enforced. CPD explained that the initial decision, i.e. to allow only those who are equipped to travel safely through a lab to do so, still stands but the requirement to wear appropriate PPE has been dropped in light of the ongoing lab coat debate (see next item), leaving a knowledge of laboratory H&S as the sole requirement. DAC was surprised at this being an issue as it has never been raised by anyone in her Division. NDP said likewise. LG stated that increased traffic through the WTB labs was an inevitable consequence of the design of the Complex and, in reality, there was little that could be done about it. CPD deemed that there was no need for further action at this time.

Item 3: Lab Coats [Papers D & E]

NDP explained that the Lab Coat policy he drafted for GRE had never been formally discussed or officially adopted. LG acknowledged this. CPD reaffirmed his original decision that lab coats should be worn when working in a lab. It was noted that BCMM staff adhere to this policy and AHF rigorously enforces it. CPD explained that GRE had been actively debating the lab coat issue and wanted some discretion on the part of the researcher rather than a blanket ruling. NDP added to this, saying it was difficult to enforce a strict policy if the PIs are not convinced of the benefits. NDP thought that Paper E took a better approach, giving clear explanation and effective arguments in favour of wearing a lab coat. CPD agreed that compliance is better achieved if the arguments are clearly understood. DAC expressed her dismay at that amount of time spent debating something that is clearly Good Lab Practice and felt that, if PIs take a firm but reasonable approach, wearing lab coats will soon become a matter of routine. CPD asked the Committee members if Paper E convinced them that lab coats should be worn by people working in labs. Committee members responded positively. CPD concluded that the policy stands and PIs are requested to implement it.

Item 8i: Wearing of Gloves in Non-lab Areas

LG informed the Committee that there have been several complaints about staff and students wearing gloves in non-lab areas. LG asked the Committee for permission to put signs up on all main lab doors reminding personnel to remove their gloves and wash their hands before leaving the laboratory. Committee gave permission for this to go ahead.

H&SWG

Item 8vi: Appropriate Footwear and Clothing in Labs

A member of the H&S Committee asked for clarification on whether sandals and/or shorts are appropriate for wearing in the labs. CPD said that sandals were clearly not appropriate footwear for the laboratory but he was not prepared to make a statement on suitable clothing. LG advised against making any firm statements at this stage in favour of beginning a process of educating lab staff as to what Good Lab Practice entails and why they should adhere to it. IGS said he would be happy to get involved in this process and that Safety Services already provide training for PhD students at Ninewells. DAC thought it was important for Honours students to be included. CPD noted that the high H&S standards achieved in the Teaching Labs will ensure that Life Sciences undergraduate students already have a good grasp of GLP. IGS asked if PIs would support this training initiative. CPD assured him that they would. H&SWG and IGS to take this forward.

H&SWG
/IGS

4. Disposable Gloves [Paper F]

The policy on Use of Disposable Gloves in CLS was approved.

5. Risk Assessment

a) Risk Assessment System Progress Report

LG gave an account of the progress made to date, primarily in the teaching labs. LG admitted that she was concerned about the scale of the risk assessment deficit in the research block and how best to tackle it and said that any help or advice would be much appreciated. IGS informed the Committee that he and LG had already discussed this and agreed that a simplified approach is required. The emphasis will be on identifying and tackling significant risks. DAC has kindly agreed to discuss with her PIs the possibility of piloting the system in CBI. DAC to keep IGS and LG informed. LG is hoping Julie Frearson's group will also participate in the pilot phase. CPD stressed the importance of practitioners working at the bench being involved in the process. The Committee endorsed the proposed approach. H&SWG and IGS to progress this forward as a matter of priority.

H&SWG
/IGS

b) CLS Policy on Risk Assessment of Work Activities [Paper G]

The CLS Policy on Risk Assessment of Work Activities was approved.

6. Management of Work Related Stress [Papers H & J]

CPD summarised the generic assessment approach being taken in CLS and invited GJ, the College's Human Resources Officer, to comment. GJ gave her perspective on the issue and stressed the importance of utilising the existing University management policies/guidance and support systems. IGS referred to the existing sickness absence reporting policy and highlighted the fact that cases of work related ill health must be reported to Safety Services. There was some debate about who was responsible for informing Safety Services and whether the CLS policy needs to detail this. It was agreed that CLS staff already report work related illness on the Record of Sickness Absence which is sent to Salaries, and that Central Services should have a system in place for this information to be made available to Human Resources/Safety Services if appropriate. GA gave an outline of how the system will work in practice. CPD emphasised the need for PIs to read the generic assessments for all personnel groups relevant to them. NDP asked if a shorter summary of the assessments could be produced, bullet pointing the PIs responsibilities. GA pointed out that the assessments already clearly indicate the PIs responsibilities. IGS said the draft assessment, Paper J, was excellent. IGS informed the Committee that a new mental health nurse was joining the Occupational Health team and that he would be publicising the improved service. IGS asked if the CLS policy could make reference to the option of self referral to Occupational Health and the Counselling Service and remind staff of the Well Being Contacts network. CPD said this would require some internal discussion. LG pointed out that the policy requires some minor modifications to be agreed with GJ. CPD recommended that the Committee approve Paper H as it is mean time. The Committee gave its approval. H&SWG and GJ to finalise the policy and roll out the risk assessments. IGS added that he is also developing a training programme for managers in conjunction with Terry Vickers. CPD thanked IGS for the training and support provided by Safety Services.

H&SWG
/GJ

7. Inspections

a) External [Paper K]

LG summarised the key points arising from the recent inspections by SEPA and HSE. IGS assured the Committee that Safety Services have the laser safety issues in hand. IGS also said SEPA were impressed with the standards being achieved in CLS and wanted to use our systems as examples of good practice. IGS acknowledged LG's contribution in developing these systems.

b) Internal [Paper L]

The reaction of GRE personnel to the H&S inspection conducted by H&S Working Group, as detailed in Paper L, was discussed. CPD made it clear that H&S inspections are essential for monitoring and ensuring compliance, and form a critical part of all good H&S management systems. However, he accepted that genuine anxiety/unhappiness had been caused during the inspection on WTB M, albeit unintentionally. CPD felt that the key issue here was lack of communication and that this has to be addressed. CPD also raised the issues of photographs being taken during inspections and agreed with the H&S Working Group that this should be allowed to continue, providing people are not photographed. IGS said he supported this approach and stressed that it was important that individuals did not feel persecuted or criminalised. NDP said that GRE's reaction was a symptom of the culture of distrust of H&S in general and the feeling of a confrontational approach to implementation. CPD acknowledged that some work has to be done on both sides to dispel these perceptions. CPD suggested that the relevant Lab Manager accompany the inspection team and, if the Division thinks it appropriate, a PI could also be involved. AHF's recommendation was to warn staff that unscheduled inspections could occur at any time and that documentary evidence, including photographs, of infringements would be recorded. H&SWG to take these comments on board.

H&SWG

8. Accidents/Incidents [Paper M]

LG highlighted some of the more notable accidents that have occurred since the last meeting. NDP called for this list to be emailed directly to the PIs, but in a less cryptic form. AHF had also asked if the list could be displayed on safety notice-boards. LG to consult IB on this. IGS said he would forward on the Medical School accident/incident statistics.

**LG/IB
IGS**

9. AOCB

CPD informed the Committee that IB had been leading an initiative to equip the College with defibrillators and get a team of people trained in their use. This issue had been raised independently by Jason Swedlow who had witnessed a person being resuscitated at a conference he attended recently. Both Jason and AIL had expressed their support for IB's initiative. IRL said the issue required careful consideration, as highlighted by AHF's email on the subject. IGS pointed out that the only University building currently equipped with defibrillators is the Sports Centre. They have had cause to use the defibrillators only three times, during IGS's time here, and on each occasion the victim could not be resuscitated. IGS went on to inform the Committee that the chances of us having a cardiac arrest case are extremely small and there are far more significant risks that should be tackled first. On this basis, Safety Services will not be supporting this initiative. JE wanted it noted that the College operates on more than one site and he does not want defibrillators in the School of Learning & Teaching, especially if the scheme is not supported by Safety Services. There were no other comments from the Committee. CPD decided that this issue will not be pursued any further.