

MINUTES

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Meeting Details

Meeting title: Health, Safety, Welfare and Strategic Committee Meeting (HSWSC)

Chair: Brendan Casey

Agenda Reference:

Date and Time: Tuesday 17 February 2026, commencing at 10:00 GMT

Location: CLC 2.01 VCO Board Room, Headington Campus

Attendees:

Brendan Casey (BC) Registrar and Chief Operating Officer; Sarah Thonemann (ST) Chief People Officer; Andy King (AK), Partnerships and Placements Manager (UNISON); Paul Bradley (PB), Director of Occupational Health & Safety; Abigail Reilly (AbR), Deputy Director Organisational Effectiveness and Development; Sharon Willett (SW), Safety Manager; Sarah Irons (SI), Bioinnovation Hub Manager; Jill Millar (JM), Senior Lecturer in Business and Management (UCU); Simon Hogg (SH), UNISON; Christine O'Hara (Secretary), Executive Assistant to the Chief People Officer.

Apologies of Absence:

Alan Reeve (AR), Savills Reader (UCU); Jerry Woods (JW), Director of Estates and Campus Services.

6. Minutes of the HSWSC meeting held on 29 October 2025 -

HSWSC260217/02

- 6.1. The minutes from the meeting on 29 October 2025 were reviewed. **Action:** One amendment was requested for section 4.2 to replace the term 'general management' with 'genetic modification'.
- 6.2. The minutes were approved subject to the noted amendment.

7. Action log review and matters arising -

HSWSC260217/02

- 7.1. The committee reviewed the outstanding actions from previous meetings. **Action:** Log Format: BC suggested adding target dates to the action log to improve tracking. The committee agreed that these dates should be suggested by the individuals responsible and be achievable.
- 7.2. Fire Assembly Points: It was reported that, although links to updated versions could be shared, the main website pages had not yet been updated. This item remained in progress.
- 7.3. Occupational Health (OH) and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP): SH had previously enquired about historically low usage of these services. PB confirmed that analysis of the data was ongoing.
- 7.4. Powered Transport Procedure: Estates and Campus Services were engaged in a project to install chargers for staff and students. A project manager had been appointed, and a meeting was scheduled with the university insurers and key stakeholders to explore solutions.
- 7.5. OH Referral Statistics: PB confirmed that the report breaking down statistics by department was now complete.
- 7.6. Health and Safety Awareness Training: PB and JM had discussed updating paperwork to include union Health and Safety officers as designated individuals. **Action:** JM agreed to pass the updated documentation through for finalisation.
- 7.7. OS Annual Report Objectives: PB confirmed these were broadly approved and submitted to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the People Committee.
- 7.8. Event Health and Safety Procedure: This remained in draft form while workflows with faculties and directorates were finalised.
- 7.9. COSHH: PB confirmed that the follow-up regarding comments from SI was complete.
- 7.10. EDI Collaboration: PB was collaborating with AbR and people managers to develop a plan for conveying support and information to managers.
- 7.11. Reasonable Adjustments: Guidance had been produced and shared with the Disability Equality Steering Group. The work was ongoing.

8. H&S Report -

HSWSC260217/03

- 8.1. **Specific Items to Note:** SW reported three residential fires within the report period. These involved a prohibited heater, a cooking incident, and a faulty dryer. All were investigated by the fire safety advisor. PB reported an additional recent incident involving smoke from a microwave in the JHBb Forum. Security handled the situation effectively, and a full report would be provided at the next meeting.
- 8.2. **Health and Safety Objectives:** Progress was noted against all four annual objectives. Of particular note, the electronic permit-to-work system had been rolled out to IT and ECS, and the online manager health and safety course was being developed with AbR team.

- 8.3. **Fire Evacuation Drills:** Drills were generally successful, though technical issues were identified for Estates and Campus Services. It was noted that some staff displayed poor attitudes and were uncooperative during the drills.
- 8.4. **Inspections:** The Health and Safety team conducted 15 inspections in high-risk, residential and low-risk areas to monitor compliance. Findings were communicated to the relevant teams.
- 8.5. **Governance and Objectives:** JM queried the process for setting objectives. PB clarified that the Health and Safety team made recommendations based on management system outputs and that the committee approved them before they were sent to SLT.
- 8.6. **Workload and Stress:** JM expressed concern regarding workload-related stress and the results of a recent pulse survey. Despite a reducing trend in sickness absence data (from 0.4 to 0.2), the committee discussed whether this was due to under-reporting. PB noted that university policies were recently recognised as good practice by the UCA workload reference group, though this did not imply that stress was not a present issue. PB added that absence data should be viewed alongside EAP and OH data to provide a representative picture for managers.
- 8.7. **Policy and Procedure Approvals:**
- 8.7.1. Health and Safety at Work Policy: Reviewed annually with no content changes, though Alistair Fitt's name was to be replaced by Helen Laville's.
- 8.7.2. Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) and Containment Devices: A new procedure was introduced to provide a framework for installation and maintenance. SI suggested that 'do not use' signage for failed equipment should be applied immediately rather than within 24 or 48 hours. This was agreed. SW made the point that appendices were available as support documents to be used when documents were not already in place.
- 8.7.3. First Aid: The updated procedure accounts for hybrid working by training more staff in one-day emergency courses for low-hazard environments, while maintaining three-day courses for high-hazard areas.
- 8.7.4. Occupational Health: Referral data was being shared with managers by departments where numbers were sufficient to protect anonymity. A guidance document on reasonable adjustments was being reviewed by the Disability Network and would be shared with the unions following discussion with Felicity Ball (Policy Manager).
- 8.7.5. The H&S at Work Policy was approved, subject to the name change.
- 8.7.6. The LEV procedure was approved subject to the amendment regarding immediate signage.
- 8.7.7. The First Aid procedure was approved.

Action: Update names in the Health and Safety at Work Policy (PB - Immediate).

Action: Amend LEV procedure to require immediate signage and finalise appendices (SW - Next meeting).

Action: Share reasonable adjustments guidance with trade unions for review (Next meeting).

9. Genetic Modification of Organisms (GMO) unconfirmed committee minutes (ACGM 2025/1) and annual report 2025 (ACGM 2025/2) - HSWSC260217/04

- 9.1. SI presented the minutes and annual report to the committee. At the November meeting, SI drew our attention to the four new risk assessments and the 26 active research projects, with 31 project leaders. Organisms on campus include microbiology, fruit flies, and plants.
- 9.2. SI confirmed that the SAPO license was renewed proactively in December 2025 and is valid for 5 years. SI also confirmed that a new career researcher was aware of her training responsibilities regarding students and post-docs.

10. Trade union items (UNISON) - No items submitted.

11. Any other business - No items submitted.

12. Dates of the next meeting

- 12.1. The next meeting is confirmed one Tuesday 16 June, 2026. VCO Board room CLC 2.01