

Health and Safety Committee

Covid-19 Meeting

9 October 2020, 3.00pm

Minutes

Present Members:

Ms Fiona Ryland (Convenor)

Dr Matthew Blain, Executive Director of Human Resources

Miss Hayley Boakes

Ms Sandra Bond

Ms Theo Bryer

Ms Sonia Buckingham

Mr Colin Byelong

Dr Alun Coker

Miss Yasmeen Daoud

Dr Rachel Hadi-Talab

Mr Keith Harvey

Mr David Ladd

Dr Matt Lougher

Ms Carol Paige

Ms Hayley Ramsay, Deputy Head of Safety

Mrs Eira Rawlings

Mr Paul Stirk, Head of Safety

Ms Joanne Tapper

Attendees:

Mr Simon Cooke

Mr Ian Dancy

Mr Richard Jackson

Ms Sian Minett

Mr Duncan Palmer

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Prof Irene Petersen

Apologies:

Mr Max Hill, Director of Workplace Health

Ms Tansy Jones

Mr Brian Kavanagh

Part I: Preliminary Business

1 Minutes

- 1.1 The Health and Safety Committee (HSC) approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2020 with this addition at 116.9: the Trade Unions requested that UCL develop a test strategy among students living in halls of residence which includes both individuals who are symptomatic as well as asymptomatic.

2 Matters Arising (Paper 1-01)

- 2.1 Arising from minute 103.8, brief Heads of Department on the revised guidance on use of PPE equipment at the next leadership forum. The Head of Safety

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2.5

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5.3 The fire safety policy and standard were approved with the feedback from this Committee to be being included in the submission of the documents to the Provost and Senior Management Team.

6 Status update of DSE assessment compliance (Paper 1-04)

6.1 The Head of Safety presented the update. The charts showed very little movement from those previously reported.

6.2 It was agreed that the programme would continue to be monitored at this committee.

7 Items for discussion from the Trade Unions (Paper 1-05)

7.1 It was requested that UCL urgently instigate weekly pool testing of all students and staff who are on site,

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Written response from the Convenor to agenda item 7

Introduction

At the Friday 9 October Health & Safety Committee the Chief Operating Officer agreed to provide a written response to the final agenda item, which included the following requests:

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Estates and the Timetabling Team have followed Government and HSE advice at all times, putting the safety of staff and students first. UCL could have opted (like some other HE institutions) to use a 1m+ approach for room capacity. There are a number of policies and concepts in operation which may be causing some confusion:

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capacities of 150, 100 or 80 depending on layout, giving a revised percentage occupancy of between 56 and 30%. Moreover, because normal occupancy is dependent on a range of factors, there are marked differences in the original room capacity. For example at the IoE room layouts were initially already relatively low capacity compared to a fixed seat lecture theatre which tend to be much higher density. Therefore it is considered safe for some teaching rooms to have an occupancy of more than 25% of its original capacity.

The Institute of Education was also raised as an area of concern by a member of the HSC. Since this feedback has been received the spaces have been reviewed by the timetabling team and appendices two to five include example photos of what the team found. We remain confident that the spaces meet the expectations set out above.

Post-implementation review and amendment

Notwithstanding the rigorous approach applied it is inevitable with a supply of c.400 teaching rooms that some room layouts work better than others.

To address this a further process of structured review of room capacities and layouts - whilst maintaining social distancing at 2m is underway to ensure that teaching rooms provide the most safe experience for students and staff alike.

This review will consider both:

- (i) the physical review of rooms and
- (ii) survey of staff (and students) of their experience of specific rooms.

It is intended that capacities will be revised on this basis. The physical review is underway and will be completed by Friday 16th October at the latest, and will be complemented by a survey of staff which was launched on Thursday 8th October.

In addition to this staff can raise concerns locally, with their Estates Area Facilities Managers, the Estates Helpdesk and the COVID-19 helpline. There are also the local Health & Safety committees which can discuss local issues.

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A maximum of 15 people was introduced as an immediate control for all rooms earlier in the year, to help manage the reopening of teaching spaces. It was a reasonable adjustment at the time. However, reflecting Government guidance and the risk control measures in place, the previous maximum was adjusted and each space evaluated individually to determine capacities, some of which are now above 15.

Providing that 2 metre distancing is implemented (as outlined above) along with other risk control measures for teaching spaces and the circulation spaces outside, a cap of 15 is not appropriate or deemed necessary. Some rooms are very large with a normal occupancy of over 100 people so going beyond 15 makes sense in these rooms.

Appendix 1 – Approach to assessing individual teaching room capacity

As a result of these factors when planning for a Covid-secure teaching environment the following approach was taken:

1. CAD team in Estates drew floor plans for the majority of teaching rooms at 2m social distancing (taken nose to nose). Based on the drawings, derived indicative revised capacities were calculated for the rest of the rooms.
2. A team of surveyors then undertook an initial room set up and/or marked up teaching rooms according to the CAD drawing at 2m social distancing.
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5. A specific risk assessment was completed for generic teaching spaces, supported by the issue of Guidance Notes for Teaching Staff.
6. We are also putting in place a Rapid Response Team to ensure that rooms are set up correctly (to an agreed plan) each morning (and to provide a number of other proactive and reactive services) to ensure that the socially distanced layout is in place each day.

In summary this approach:

- Covid-secure 2m social distancing layouts issued to Sodexo and portering teams (i) for display in each teaching room and (ii) for their future reference
- Nightly patrols and checks by Security to flag particular issues against a defined checklist
- Cleaners set up ahead of the start of the teaching day as per agreed 2m plan (and replenishment of sanitising materials etc.).