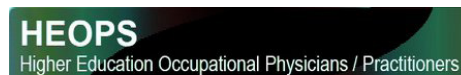


HE SECTOR-LEVEL HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2016-2020



FOREWORD



Professor Chris Gaskell CBE, Chair of the UCEA Health and Safety Committee, and Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Agricultural University.

This Strategy captures the health, safety and wellbeing priorities at a sector level that the UCEA Health and Safety Committee has identified for the period 2016-2020. The Committee brings together the sector's key stakeholders in the area of health, safety and wellbeing and acts as a central point for discussion of health and safety matters relating to staff and students within the Higher Education (HE) sector. The Strategy has been informed by consultation with other relevant sector associations and member institutions, and the sector trade unions and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) through the Higher Education Safety and Health (HESH) Forum (see [Glossary](#)). It is crucially the contributions from sector associations and member institutions that have enabled the successful delivery of the 2011-2015 Sector-level Plan. Important outputs for the sector have included:

- New guidance on *Leadership and Management of Health and Safety in Higher Education Institutions (2015)* developed by USHA, in partnership with UCEA. This replaced the *UCEA Code of Best Practice in Health and Safety Management (2001)*. UCEA disseminated the guidance to heads of institutions and has worked with sector bodies including the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) to promote it within the sector.
- The production since 2012 of annual absence surveys, providing trend data for the sector and a valuable benchmarking resource for institutions. A comparison of the sector's absence levels with national averages from the wider economy is now possible, providing an overview of how the sector is performing in this regard.
- Health and Safety conferences on areas of particular interest to the HE sector. For example, *Looking after employee health during turbulent times*, held in 2015, focused on the important issue of workplace health and wellbeing. The conference is an example of the steps that have been taken to widen the scope of the UCEA Health and Safety Committee to include wellbeing, an area which continues to be a priority for the Committee.
- Identifying opportunities for collaboration with key stakeholders, promoting a cohesive approach to work on health, safety and wellbeing within the sector. For example, UCEA and USHA produced new guidance on *Health and Safety in Fieldwork (2011)* and were jointly nominated for an Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) 'partnership initiative' award in 2011.
- Consultation with the trade unions on health, safety and wellbeing matters has continued through regular HESH Forum meetings. These are now chaired by the Chair of the Health and Safety Committee, linking the two groups more effectively. The HESH Forum has also proved to be a valuable means to collaborate and consult regularly with the HSE on a range of issues impacting the HE sector.
- The development of the UCEA website to provide a central location for guidance and resources from across the sector on a variety of health, safety and wellbeing matters. Communication with institutions in this area has improved and good practice has been promoted through the provision of case studies on employee wellbeing.
- Participation in a number of wider reviews relating to health and safety at a statutory and a sector level. Examples include the Löfstedt Report and the triennial review of the role of the HSE as a non-departmental public body.
- The development of a toolkit to assist institutions in devising staffing strategies for overseas campuses, which includes a section on health safety and wellbeing issues.
- The establishment of new regional network groups on employee wellbeing and engagement, with assistance from UCEA and UHR. UCEA and UHR continue to facilitate these groups and enable the sharing of practice between the different regions and parts of the UK.

The 2016-2020 Strategy provides a framework of key themes which will inform and shape more detailed annual Action Plans. In taking forward these areas of work, close dialogue will be maintained with member institutions, and we will engage actively with key stakeholders and partners. This will ensure that flexibility in line with changing sector needs and priorities can be achieved. We have recognised the on-going nature of some of the key objectives identified in the 2011-15 Plan, and highlighted areas where work will be continued. The Strategy takes account of the HSE's new strategy for the occupational health and safety system set out in *Helping Great Britain Work Well* (launched in February 2016) where relevant to the HE Sector, to ensure coherence with the regulator's strategic priorities. UCEA's Health and Safety Committee will ensure the Strategy contributes to, not duplicates, key areas of work already being undertaken by the sector associations represented on the Committee. We look forward to providing effective support to institutions in tackling the health, safety and wellbeing challenges that the future presents.

PURPOSE AND AIMS

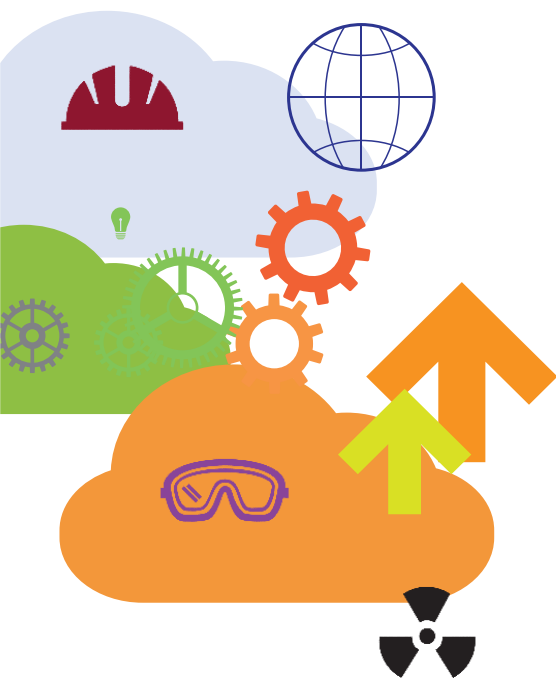
As in previous years, the Strategy aims to put in place sector-level support and guidance to member institutions, actioned through the work of various partner organisations and overseen by the UCEA Health and Safety Committee. Whilst it is aimed principally at sector level, the themes articulated in the Strategy will also be relevant for institutions when setting their individual health and safety strategies. It includes areas which may additionally impact on HR and student support strategies such as ill-health, stress and mental health management. The diversity of HE institutions and the considerable expertise within them is acknowledged and it is intended that the Strategy should complement the work already being planned or undertaken at other levels.



ENVIRONMENTAL DRIVERS AND CHALLENGES

Higher education in the UK is undergoing a period of significant change, from political, cultural, economic and technological drivers. The changing landscape of HE, highlighted in the UCEA Plan 2016-2020, is also central to health, safety and wellbeing – the pressure to produce world-leading research outputs and a new regime for teaching excellence, continued austerity around public spending and the efficiency agenda, funding reforms, fast-paced changes in technology and processes, an increasing diversity of higher education providers and intense competition in the HE national and overseas markets. In addition, consideration must be given

to the increasing diversity of staff and students, the development of alternative and complex business structures and new ways of working. An important change, over recent years, has been the greater focus by the HSE on simplifying its advice and guidance, and on directing its inspection activities to higher and less well-controlled risks. In addition, the Sentencing Council's new sentencing guidelines for health and safety offences and corporate manslaughter (applicable from February 2016) highlight the financial and reputational as well as human risk in failing to provide a safe environment.



OUR PRIORITY THEMES FOR HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Endeavouring to provide a clear and straightforward sector-level health, safety and wellbeing strategy for the period to 2020, three integrated themes are set out: **Culture, Competence, and Collaboration**. These themes incorporate work streams that take into account the priorities, environmental drivers and challenges referenced above, and where relevant the HSE's strategic themes for the occupational health and safety system set out in *Helping Great Britain Work Well*.





Theme 1: Culture

The Health and Safety Committee will continue its work on developing a positive health and safety culture within the sector as a whole. Embedding health and safety within institutions includes visible commitment by leaders and managers, recognition of the fact that everyone has a role to play, and the co-operation and engagement of employees and their representatives. To be effective, health, safety and wellbeing initiatives need to be backed by strong leadership at every level from supervisory staff to the Governing Body. This theme also acknowledges the important links between wellbeing, attendance and organisational culture. The attitudes, values, beliefs and practices which are demonstrated in an institution can affect the mental and physical wellbeing of individuals.

HSE Strategy

Two themes remain particularly relevant from the HSE's previous strategy, *Be Part of the Solution*, namely the 'need for strong leadership' and that 'everyone has a role in making improvements in health and safety performance'. *Helping Great Britain Work Well* builds on these two themes and promotes broader ownership of health and safety in Great Britain under the theme **Acting Together**. It emphasises that health and safety should not be a responsibility assigned to a particular individual or part of an organisation, but an integral part of everyone's role – "Across each....sector, we need collective ownership that best reflects local circumstances". The HSE's strategic theme **Tackling ill-health** additionally highlights the costs of work-

related ill-health and emphasises the importance of awareness and prevention to improve health outcomes.

Our priorities

The *UCEA HE Sector-level Health, Safety and Wellbeing Plan 2011 - 2015* identified the need to develop and promote guidance regarding leadership in health and safety and input into development activities for those in leadership roles. This Strategy considers how to progress this work, as well as encourage the successful management of health, safety and wellbeing as the norm for individuals, and therefore for institutions and the sector as a whole. Consideration is given to the role that positive employee engagement and improvements in sickness absence can have in improving the health, safety and wellbeing culture within institutions. The UCEA Health and Safety Committee is particularly aware of the continuing need for support and guidance on wellbeing and ill-health, including stress and mental health in relation to both staff and students. Under this theme, we recognise the demographic changes that are taking place in staff and student populations and will consider the health, safety and wellbeing implications of these. The UCEA Health and Safety Committee's activities will include:

- Promoting health and safety leadership as a means of enabling health, safety and wellbeing to become embedded within institutions; encouraging each level of leadership to be considered, from supervisory staff to the Governing Body.

- Providing support to higher education institutions (HEIs) in their work to enhance employee engagement including opportunities to network and share good practice.
- Considering how health and safety management should adapt to growing diversity in staff and student populations within institutions. Trends may include more students identifying health and disability needs; an aging workforce; a greater number of younger employees due to an increase in apprenticeships, or greater cultural diversity due to increases in international staff and students on campus.
- Assisting HEIs in managing short and long-term absence. This will include continuing to develop the UCEA Absence Survey and encouraging institutions to use the benchmark data to influence their policy and initiatives to manage absence; assisting HEIs specifically in the management of mental health and stress through, for example, reviewing available guidance, and sharing good practice and resources from within and outside the HE sector.
- Identifying opportunities to profile and work with relevant sector associations such as the LFHE, the Committee of University Chairs (CUC), AMOSSHE - The Student Services Organisation, the National Union of Students (NUS) and Healthy Universities (see Glossary).

Theme 2: Competence

Effective health and safety management requires competence at every level of the institution. This includes the ability for institutions to identify risks created by the work environment and to take steps to control them. The successful and proportionate management of risk impacts positively on all areas of health, safety and wellbeing. To assist in this we are committed to keeping institutions abreast of relevant developments in the area of health, safety and wellbeing and supporting them in their application where necessary.

HSE Strategy

Managing risk well is a strategic theme in *Helping Great Britain Work Well* - "Getting risk management right is an enabler for innovation and growth, and is integral to business success, as well as the well-being of workers." The HSE promotes sensible and proportionate risk management and notes the positive outcomes of this approach, including reduced sickness absence. Another key strategic theme is **Keeping pace with change** which addresses the need to anticipate and tackle new health and safety challenges.

Our priorities

The UCEA Health and Safety Committee aims to support institutions in developing competence in health, safety and wellbeing through the provision of information, guidance, training and opportunities to enhance skills. It will encourage relevant sector associations to organise cost-effective development events and networks to further the aims of this strategy. Further support will be given through expert guidance and information including benchmark data and legislative developments. This Strategy also recognises that students can benefit by gaining an understanding of health and safety issues and can act as ambassadors for good health and safety management. Through relevant sector organisations, we will seek to engage with HEIs in the health and safety aspects of developing students that are "work-ready" when they leave higher education, thereby increasing their employability in a competitive job market. The UCEA Health and Safety Committee's activities will include:

- Promoting effective risk management to support institutions to reduce HE accident and ill-health levels (including

for example, musculoskeletal injuries, and mental health and stress); reporting on these data at a sector level.

- Reviewing the publication and use of HE sector level accident data.
- Keeping institutions advised of developments in health, safety and wellbeing management. This will include monitoring changes in health and safety legislation (at UK and EU levels), disseminating relevant information, maintaining a watching brief on the HSE's strategic priorities and supplementing their advice, where necessary, with sector-specific guidance.
- Planning seminars on a health, safety or wellbeing topic of interest to member institutions, seeking to include where appropriate perspectives from outside the HE sector.
- Strengthening links and identifying new partnerships with relevant sector associations on issues relating to students, such as AMOSHHE, the NUS and Healthy Universities.



Theme 3: Collaboration

The UCEA Health and Safety Committee is committed to securing engagement amongst the sector's various associations and with key stakeholder organisations, as well as relevant national bodies - this theme runs consistently throughout this Strategy. We recognise that there is a need for workforce partnerships based on trust, respect and co-operation. Through effective collaboration, greater coherence in the work we do can be achieved. We particularly support the sharing of good practice within the sector, whilst recognising the value of collaborative learning with other sectors and countries.

HSE Strategy

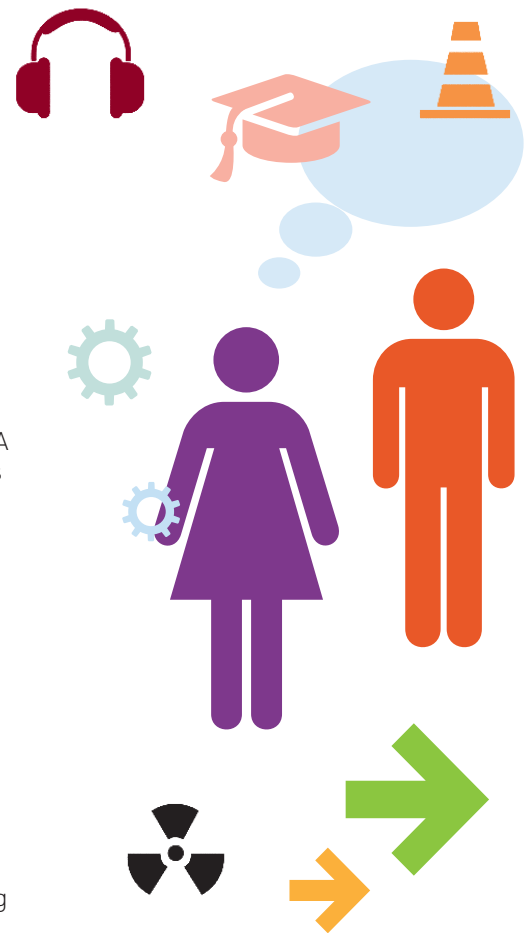
Helping Great Britain Work Well encourages organisations to share success (**Sharing our success**) and, as previously noted, to act together to address health and safety challenges (**Acting together**). The HSE's Strategy promotes the sharing of best practice and the latest thinking and innovation around the world, highlighting that this can influence health and safety systems overseas and make it easier for overseas expansion.

Our Priorities

The HE sector benefits from the work of a number of sector agencies whose work contributes to improving the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students; these include key organisations involved through the UCEA Health and Safety Committee, such as USHA, AUDE, HEOPS, AMOSSHE and UHR, as well as national bodies such as the HSE, IOSH and the HE trade unions. The Strategy aims to improve institutions' awareness of the work of these organisations, their interconnections and relationships with UCEA and its Health and Safety Committee. The Committee will seek to identify opportunities for joint-working and cost-sharing, and the duplication of work will be avoided. It will also participate in external

reviews and consultations wherever beneficial to UCEA members, and will seek opportunities to collaborate with organisations outside the HE sector, including through European links. The need to support institutions that are expanding their education delivery overseas is also relevant here. The UCEA Health and Safety Committee's activities will include:

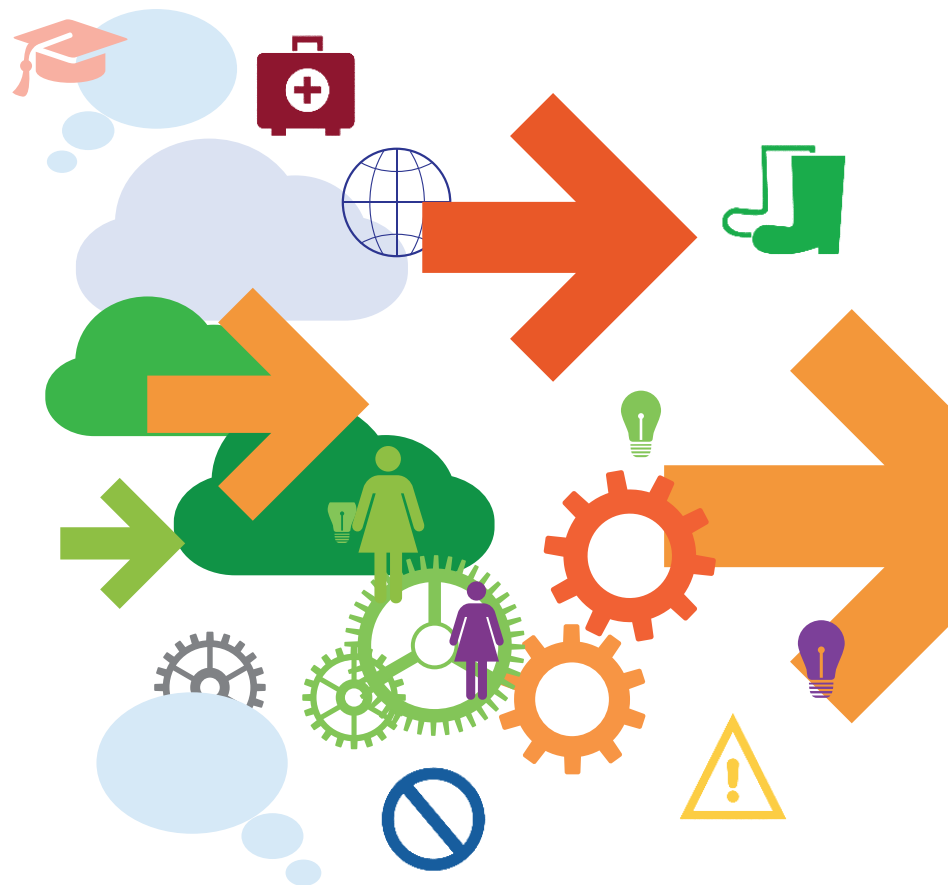
- Keeping institutions aware of relevant initiatives and resources of partner associations through a range of communications.
- Supporting the development and sharing of good practice and innovation in key health, safety and wellbeing areas by, for example, expanding UCEA's bank of case studies on a wide range of topics; supporting and encouraging networks for practitioners; encouraging learning from beyond the HE sector.
- Seeking to improve institutions' awareness of the networks and opportunities for collaboration relevant to health, safety and wellbeing that exist in the sector.
- Continuing to provide a forum for positive dialogue with the trade unions at sector level on health and safety matters, and exploring opportunities to collaborate with the HSE on specific HE sector issues.
- Working with relevant sector organisations on new or revised resources and guidance materials and supporting dissemination throughout the sector.
- Supporting HEIs with initiatives regarding international mobility - to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students working or studying beyond the institution, or based in overseas campuses.



TAKING FORWARD THE STRATEGY

The Strategy has been developed in a way that allows sufficient flexibility to incorporate new priorities which may arise over the period to 2020. The Strategy provides the framework for more detailed Action Plans, which will be developed annually to provide further information on specific activities that will be undertaken during a particular year, together with timescales and outcomes.

The sector associations represented on the UCEA Health and Safety Committee will have a role to play in delivering the annual Action Plans. The Committee will take the lead in drawing up and monitoring the annual Action Plans, and in monitoring the overall Strategy. Progress and data will be reported more widely in the UCEA Annual Health and Safety reports. To assist the Committee in developing Action Plans which reflect the sector's needs, we would welcome feedback and contributions from individual institutions throughout the course of this Strategy.



APPENDIX

UCEA Health and Safety Committee membership

The UCEA Health and Safety Committee brings together the following professional associations and bodies in the sector:

AHUA	Association of Heads of University Administration
AMOSSHE	The Student Services Organisation
AUDE	Association of University Directors of Estates
AURPO	Association of University Radiation Protection Officers
BUFDG	British Universities Finance Directors Group
CUBO	College and University Business Officers
CUC	Committee of University Chairs
GuildHE	One of two formal representative bodies for UK higher education
HEOPS	Higher Education Occupational Health Practitioners
MSC	Medical Schools Council
UHR	Universities Human Resources
USHA	Universities Safety and Health Association
UUK	Universities UK

GLOSSARY

Healthy Universities: UK National Network offering a facilitative environment for the development of a whole university approach to health and wellbeing.

HESH: Higher Education Safety and Health Forum: a tripartite group between UCEA (as the employers' representative), the trade unions (as the staff representative) and the HSE.

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