



Joint principles for safe working on campus

UCEA, USHA and the joint trade unions have developed these joint principles to support HEIs to keep their campuses as safe as possible and to ensure the health and wellbeing of HE staff, students and visitors.

The parties recognise that all members of an HEI's community have a personal responsibility for operating in a safe way, looking after themselves, and ensuring their own health and safety.

1. Health and safety legislation

Any temporary government guidance issued to deal with an emergency health issue, including Covid-19, does not supersede existing health and safety legislation. HEIs must abide by statutory health and safety obligations relevant to their nation, such as the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, which provide rights to recognised trade union safety representatives; and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which contains the legal duty on employers to conduct risk assessments. Health and safety legislation, coupled with any temporary government guidance specific to an emergency health issue such as Covid-19, should be seen as the minimum standards for HEIs to achieve.

2. Use of government guidance for safe workplaces

HEIs will use government guidance, public health guidance (e.g. UKSHA/devolved nation equivalent) and local public health guidance as the basis for their response to managing health and safety in the sector. At an institutional level any response to a public health crisis will be proportionate to the impact, and factor in relevant local conditions, circumstances and actions that employers and unions may need to consider. Unions will work with HEIs in the implementation of any relevant guidance, permanent or temporary, for their institution through their existing H&S Committee (or equivalent) arrangements.

This includes the appropriate management of risk, through the completion of risk assessments where relevant, incorporating relevant advice and expertise and giving appropriate weight and consideration to any applicable guidance and risk.

3. Health Monitoring

Health monitoring, and the appropriate response, should be informed at an institutional level by guidance from local public health protection teams and, where relevant, managed through the HEI's communicable disease outbreak plan.



It is recognised that universities operate in an international context. It may therefore be necessary, as part of the institution's approach to health monitoring, to take into account any relevant regional, national and international health data (e.g. World Health Organisation) in the case of infectious diseases as part of the HEI's response to maintaining a safe campus.

4. Consultation with campus trade unions

HEIs recognise the positive contributions that unions can make. UCEA HEI member institutions commit to consulting with recognised trade unions on how the institution will manage risks to staff health and safety, including emergency health issues such as respiratory diseases. HEIs should endeavour to work jointly with trade union representatives, staff and students to resolve issues.

5. Vaccinations

UCEA, USHA and the joint trade unions, where appropriate, agree that the joint statement that was agreed during the Covid-19 pandemic is recognised as a good underlying set of principles for managing the roll out of any relevant regional or national vaccination programme arising from an emergency health issue.

6. Testing

UCEA, USHA and the joint trade unions agree to promote a culture of safety in Higher Education. This includes supporting any regional or national roll out of testing for a public health condition. Where appropriate, the joint statement agreed during the Covid-19 pandemic is recognised as a good set of underlying principles for managing the roll out of any relevant testing programme.

7. Healthy workplaces

In acknowledgement of the lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic, UCEA, USHA and the joint trade unions encourage HEIs to implement, and regularly review, health and safety practices that will promote a generally healthy work environment. These include measures that will help to reduce the spread of infectious conditions amongst staff, such as promoting the important benefits of ventilated work and study spaces (see below), and measures that promote good mental and physical health, and wellbeing.



8. Related documents

These principles should be read with reference to:

- Joint statement between USHA, UCEA and the HE trades unions on ventilation: This joint statement aims to acknowledge the importance and benefits of ventilation in the workplace and the positive impact that it can have on the health and wellbeing of people.
- Raising a Concern - What to do if a health and safety concern is identified (USHA, 2021): this provides a typical escalation process which allows managers and institutions to reflect and remedy issues whilst ensuring that concerns receive due attention.

October 2023