

Health and Safety Guidelines: HSG 8.1



Consultation and Communication

1. Purpose

This document provides guidance for achieving effective consultation and communication with Workers on work health and safety matters.

2. Scope

This document applies to the Executive Committee, Leaders, Supervisors, Health and Safety Committees, Health and Safety Team and Workers.

3. Definitions

In the context of the Health and Safety Management System Framework, the following definitions apply:

- (a) **Hazard** means a situation, condition, state of affairs or event that exposes a Worker to a risk to his or her health or safety during the course of work.
- (b) **Incident** means an unplanned event that caused, or could have caused, an illness or injury to a Worker.
- (c) **Leader/Supervisor** means any member of the University who is responsible for supervising staff and/or for undergraduate or postgraduate students and/or for leading research projects.
- (d) **Near Miss** means an unplanned Incident which did not result in an injury or illness to a Worker.
- (e) **Worker** includes an employee, conjoint, student on work experience, contractor, sub-contractor, and volunteer.
- (f) **Work Group** means a group of Workers who belong to a particular discipline, unit, team, or location at the University, and who are represented by a member who sits on a Health and Safety Committee.
- (g) **Consultation** means taking the views of Workers into account when making decisions relating to workplace health and safety.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Executive Committee

The Executive Committee should ensure that procedures are established to promote Worker consultation and communication on work health and safety matters within the University.

4.2 Leaders and Supervisors

Leaders and Supervisors should:

- (a) Consult with Workers regarding arrangements to enable them to contribute to making decisions affecting their health, safety and welfare at work;
- (b) Provide resources, meeting facilities and time to enable consultation with Workers to take place;
- (c) Ensure relevant information about health and safety matters is communicated to Workers; and
- (d) Ensure that regular meetings are held with Workers for the purpose of health and safety consultation.

4.3 Health & Safety Team

The Health and Safety Team should:

- (a) Provide relevant health and safety information to Leaders and Supervisors to enable effective consultation and communication with Workers; and
- (b) Provide input to Health and Safety Committees to assist with communicating health and safety information.

4.4 Workers

Workers should:

- (a) Actively participate in work health and safety consultation and communication activities; and
- (b) Provide assistance when required in the communication of health and safety issues to other Workers.

5. Guidelines

5.1 When to consult

Leaders and Supervisors should consult with Workers when:

- (a) Identifying hazards and assessing risks and making decisions about ways to eliminate or minimise those risks;
- (b) Making decisions about facilities for the welfare of Workers;
- (c) Proposing changes that may affect the health or safety of Workers;
- (d) Making decisions about health and safety procedures, including those for:
 - (i) Consultation with Workers;
 - (ii) Resolving work health or safety issues;
 - (iii) Monitoring the health and safety of Workers; and
 - (iv) Monitoring workplace conditions;
- (e) Providing health and safety information and training to Workers; and
- (f) Conducting Incident and Near Miss investigations.

5.2 Consultation arrangements

- (a) Consultation arrangements should be determined by considering the structure of the workforce, the nature of the work and the risks of the activities which are undertaken. For example:
 - (i) The work arrangements, e.g. flexitime;
 - (ii) The number and location of work groups for a Faculty or Division; and
 - (iii) The frequency of Health and Safety Committee meetings and other forms of communication.
- (b) The University has a number of established mechanisms for consulting and communicating with Workers. These include:
 - (i) Work Group meetings;
 - (ii) The University Health and Safety Steering Committee;
 - (iii) Faculty and Division Health and Safety Committees;
 - (iv) Chemical and Radiation Technical Sub-Committee; and
 - (v) Institutional Biosafety Committee.

5.3 Work Group meetings

- (a) Work Group meetings provide a means of consultation with Workers and an opportunity to share health and safety information that allows for discussion and feedback.

- (b) The Health and Safety Team can provide input to Work Group meetings and consideration can be given to some of the following topics for discussion:
 - (i) The causes of recent Incidents, Near Misses and possible preventative measures;
 - (ii) Providing information on safety requirements such as Incident reporting, wearing personal protective equipment, risk assessments, equipment and workplace inspections;
 - (iii) Recognising, reporting and correcting hazards;
 - (iv) Providing information on workplace modifications, new plant or equipment, new processes and seeking feedback from Workers on the potential impact on health and safety; and
 - (v) Information on specific workplace Hazards e.g. manual handling tasks, exposure to hazardous substances.

5.4 Internal communication of Health and Safety information

- (a) Communication methods need to be tailored to the audience and structured according to the information to be communicated.
- (b) Wherever possible communication should be structured so that it is two-way to provide for feedback or comment. The following methods of communication are utilised across the University:
 - (i) H&S Committee meetings, Work Group meetings and circulation of meeting minutes;
 - (ii) Health and safety induction for new and transferred Workers;
 - (iii) Training sessions;
 - (iv) Email and the UON website;
 - (v) Safety Alerts;
 - (vi) UON newsletters e.g. In The Loop;
 - (vii) Notice boards;
 - (viii) Signs and posters;
 - (ix) Employee surveys; and
 - (x) Personal face-to-face communication by leaders and supervisors when in the workplace.

5.5 External communication

Where an external party (including a government authority) requests information relating to health and safety matters within the University, prior to providing any information the Leader, Supervisor or Worker should first contact the Health and Safety Team.

6. References

[UON HSG 2.1 Regulatory Requirements](#)

[UON HSG 2.2 Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[UON HSG 4.1 H&S Risk Management](#)

[UON HSG 7.1 Incident Notification and Investigation](#)

[UON HSG 8.2 Health and Safety Committees](#)

[UON HSG 10.1 Inspections and Testing](#)

7. Attachments

Nil