UOW SAFE@WORK

TERMS OF REFERERENCE FOR SAFE@WORK COMMITTEES

Contents

1 Background

The NSW Work Health and Safety Act (2011) and Regulation (2011) require the University to:

- ensure that the health and safety of workers and others is not put at risk
- consult with other duty holders if they have a duty to the same matter under the Act
- consult with workers who carry out work for the University or whose health and safety are likely to be directly affected by work carried out by the University
- undertake consultation in accordance with Part 5 of the Act.

This document outlines the terms of reference for Safe Work Committees for WHS including their membership, role and administration.

2 Promoting a Safe Workplace

The University is highly committed to providing a safe workplace and preventing any injury or illness to staff, students and visitors. Each local area therefore needs to be committed to the review and ongoing improvement in the management of WHS. To assist this process, a local area Safe@Work Committee (SWC) can provide a mechanism for consultation regarding specific health and safety issues at the Faculty and Divisional level.

Managers and supervisors are responsible for the health and safety of everyone in their work area and must take all reasonably practical steps to identify and control hazards in their specific work areas. SWC members have no additional 'line management' responsibility for the day to day implementation of University WHS policies and procedures.

All SWC members are to be allowed reasonable time during working hours to discuss WHS issues with persons whom they represent and also for the purpose of carrying out other tasks or functions associated with their role on the Committee.

SWC members shall have access to adequate and appropriate resources (provided by the local area) to enable and support their consultation duties. The following resources are to be provided to SWC members if required:

- meeting room or other venue
- stationery
- computer including network access
- electronic media
- telephone
- photocopier
- other required facilities.

3 Membership

Consistent with the Work Health and Safety Consultation, Co-operation and Co-ordination Code of Practice and the Worker Representation and Participation Guide, membership of the SWC needs to be determined by agreement between management and workers. At least half the members in the Committee must be workers who have not been nominated by the local area management. It is recommended that membership composition provides the Committee with the necessary level of decision making, knowledge and expertise regarding local area policy, work processes and technical matters concerning premises, processes, plant, machinery and equipment, and systems of work.

To achieve this, diversity of the work area needs to be represented on the SWC including management representation, all areas within the SWC, professional services and academic staff (if applicable), and student representation where appropriate.

3.1 Management Representation

Each SWC should contain at least one senior management representative who has the ability to make decisions about health and safety to ensure speedy and appropriate resolution of issues raised at the meetings. This management representative should be the Executive Dean/Director or their nominee.

3.2 Worker Representation

The SWC must reflect the different areas and workgroups within its responsibility and therefore, in academic units, include academic and professional services staff representatives and have the ability to facilitate student representation. Diversity of representation is critical to SWC functioning, therefore workshop, office, trades, part-time, casual and full time staff representation must all be considered when determining appropriate representation. Decisions on composition and any changes are to be recorded in meeting minutes.

The number of members on a SWC will vary between area due to the differing nature of risks and diversity in each work environment. It would be expected that the numbers on each SWC be sufficient to ensure adequate representation for all work areas.

3.3 Non-voting Members

Non-voting members of a SWC include:

- student representative
- secretary
- WHS Unit representative

The SWC may expand its own membership of non-voting members in cases where it deems a position plays a key role in the management of the University's WHS management system.

3.4 SWC Chair

The SWC Chair is to be elected by the representatives on the Committee. The Chair should be a worker representative where possible. If the majority of worker representatives choose, a management representative may be elected as the Chair. This position is recommended to be a 2 year term.

3.5 Quorum

SWC meetings are quorate when more than half of the SWC membership is present at the meeting and there is a majority of worker representatives. Management representatives present may function in the capacity of an observer to achieve the majority worker representation requirements, if necessary.

3.6 Review of Membership

Review/renewal of SWC membership positions will be held via nominations when the need is identified and election may be required where there is more than one nomination for a designated work group. Casual appointments for temporary absences or resignations will be permitted with the approval of the Chair. Appropriate diversity of work group representation must be maintained at all times. Staff members may self-nominate for positions on the SWC. Elections will be held in areas where there is an excess of nominees.

3.7 WHS Committee Representation

In accordance with the WHS Committee Constitution, a representative will be elected from each SWC group (as defined in the University Consultation Arrangement) to join the University's WHS

Committee. For further information on the process of electing SWC group representatives please refer to the [WHS Committee Constitution](#).

4 Role of the SWC

A SWC acts as an advisory and consultative body to facilitate the discussion of WHS topics between management and workers. These committees play an important role in monitoring and implementing WHS objectives at the workplace level as well as complementing the role of the Central WHS Committee by formulating and implementing specific workplace initiatives appropriate for the needs of the area it represents.

Specific roles within the SWC are detailed in the following subsections.

4.1 Chair

The role of the chair is to ensure that the SWC functions effectively by meeting the requirements set out in these Terms of Reference. Specific tasks a SWC Chair may perform include:

- ensure an agenda is developed and circulated prior to every meeting
- ensure minutes are produced that accurately record discussion and events that took place at the meeting
- use the agenda and minutes template available from the WHS web site and ensure all agenda items are given the opportunity to be starred at meetings
- allow all SWC members the opportunity to discuss issues raised at meetings
- allocate responsibilities for SWC activities to members and others for completion e.g. inspections, hazard follow up, researching SWC issues
- attend the WHS Committee meetings on a 6 monthly basis where they will be required to present a brief report summarising how the SWC has functioned over the half year period.
- complete a biannual SWC survey issued by the WHS Unit and submit it to the WHS unit when required
- develop schedules for SWC activities, including regular meetings and regular inspections, at least six months in advance and ensure it is adhered to
- liaise with their WHS Unit representative regarding any issues concerning SWC functioning
- provide the relevant area manager with a SWC meeting summary report so relevant issues can be discussed at Faculty or Departmental meetings
- ensure that committee members complete the two mandatory SWC training courses (see section 5)
- co-opt additional attendees as required e.g. specialist expertise.

4.2 SWC members

The role of each SWC member includes:

- regularly consult on WHS issues with the workers they represent
- discuss issues and concerns raised by workers at SWC meetings and provide feedback to those workers on outcomes from the meeting
- undertake activities as delegated to them by the SWC Chair e.g. undertaking workplace inspections, and reviewing risk assessments and safe work procedures
- complete the two mandatory SWC training courses offered by the University (see section 5).

4.3 Management Representatives

Management representatives are essential to ensuring that issues identified by SWC representatives are resolved promptly. Management representatives are able to facilitate communication between Faculty/Divisional management and the SWC. The management representative should be in a

position where they can, as part of their ordinary management role, facilitate decisions of the Committee.

4.4   WHS Unit Representative

The WHS Unit representative on each SWC will assist facilitate effective functioning of the SWC. The representative can assist with the identification of issues and appropriate risk control strategies. They can provide information on wider WHS issues impacting on the local area being represented by the SWC area or the University. The WHS Unit representative is a valuable information resource for the SWC as a result of their extensive knowledge of WHS legislation and the University's WHS management system requirements. The WHS representative should attempt to attend all meetings and assist with additional activities if required.

4.5   Training Requirements for SWC members

All SWC members are required to be qualified and competent to perform their allocated roles and responsibilities. It is compulsory that all SWC members complete the following consultation training courses as offered by the University:

- ▪ Module 1: WHS Principles, and
- ▪ Module 2: Addressing Hazards and Risks in the Workplace.

The WHS Unit also offers additional training tailored for specific work activities. For example, hazardous substances and ChemAlert, biosafety, radiation safety, laser safety, manual handling and ergonomics. SWC members should complete additional WHS training if is relevant to the local area they are representing.

As an alternative to the two training modules offered by the University SWC members can complete a five day health and safety representative course that has been approved by SafeWork NSW. This will be accepted if a new staff member who has completed this training within another organisation requests to be a SWC member. A copy of the training certificate needs to be submitted to the WHS Unit and a request will then be made to University's Professional Organisational Development Services (PODS) to have the worker accredited as having completed the necessary consultation training courses.

5   SWC Functions

5.1   Participation in WHS Activities

Safe Work Committees should undertake the following activities to monitor the effectiveness of WHS implementation in their area. A SWC committee is able to delegate functions to school or unit safety committee if required:

- ▪ regularly meet to discuss WHS issues in their area. Whilst the minimum requirement is to meet at least 4 times per year, medium and high risk areas may benefit from more regular meetings, such as monthly or bi-monthly
- ▪ monitor the implementation and effectiveness of workplace inspections and assist with this process when required. See the Universities Workplace Safety Inspection Guidelines for more information on inspection requirements
- ▪ investigate issues raised at SWC meetings and assist in the development of solutions. To assist with this process the involvement of other key stakeholders including line management, WHS Unit representatives, WHS Committee members or independent research may be appropriate
- ▪ identify and discuss physical and psychosocial hazards that may be a risk to staff and are not currently being controlled in represented area

- ensure workers who are represented by the SWC are regularly informed, through effective consultation, about issues and solutions that are discussed at meetings
- provision of information and advice on departmental matters to the WHS Committee
- provide recommendations to area management on methods to improve WHS at the workplace as appropriate
- identify any WHS training needs for representative areas
- escalate issues to the WHS Committee if a satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved at SWC meetings
- review any control measures or solutions to ensure their effectiveness on a regular basis.

5.2 Recommended Agenda Items for SWC Meetings

All Safe Work Committees are to use the Safe Work Committee Agenda Template available to download on the WHS web site. This template contains all necessary agenda items that need to be discussed at meetings. Medium to High risk areas may also benefit from including regular reviews of the following:

- risk assessments; the number and quality of new and revised assessments
- safe Work Procedures: number of new and revised procedures and their quality
- chemical safety issues (where appropriate)
- number of WHS inductions undertaken in the area and other WHS Training
- mental health and staff wellbeing: any psychosocial hazards or new wellbeing initiatives
- planning issues relating to operations e.g. at the beginning of session ensuring that staff and students are adequately inducted and details are recorded, academics provide emergency evacuation procedures for all students in all classes.

6 Issue Resolution

WHS issues which arise should be resolved by following the Resolving a WHS Hazard or Issue Guideline. Types of issues which could arise include reported WHS hazards or ineffective risk control measures. The resolution to any WHS dispute will be documented with WHS Committee meeting minutes.

7 Related Documents and Reference Material

- WHS Consultation Statement
- WHS Committee Constitution
- NSW WHS Act 2011
- NSW WHS Regulation 2017
- Work Health and Safety Consultation, Co-operation and Co-ordination Code of Practice (SafeWork NSW)
- Worker Representation and Participation Guide (Safe Work Australia)

8 Program Evaluation

In order to ensure that these guidelines continue to be effective and applicable to the University, these guidelines will be reviewed regularly by the WHS Unit in consultation with the WHS Committee. Conditions which might warrant a review of the guidelines on a more frequent basis would include:

- reported hazards or injuries
- non-conforming systems
- WHS Committee concern.

Following the completion of any review, the program will be revised/updated in order to correct any deficiencies. These changes will be communicated via the WHS Committee.

9 Version Control Table

Version Control	Date Released	Approved By	Amendment
1	July 1999	Manager WHS	New document created
2	May 2000	Manager WHS	Minor amendment.
3	May 2001	Manager WHS	Scheduled review minor changes only.
4	October 2003	Manager WHS	Scheduled review minor changes only.
5	October 2005	Manager WHS	Scheduled review minor changes only.
6	October 2006	Manager WHS	Minor amendment.
7	January 2009	Manager WHS	Scheduled review minor changes only.
8	August 2010	Manager WHS	Document updated to incorporate the Personnel name change to Human Resources Division.
9	December 2011	Manager WHS	Scheduled review, minor changes only.
10	March 2012	Manager WHS	Rebrand and document updated to incorporate the changes to legislation through the introduction of the WHS Act 2011.
11	March 2013	Manager WHS	Minor changes only.
12	January 2014	Manager WHS	Updated to incorporate changes to Faculty and School structure.
13	August 2017	Manager WHS	Scheduled review. Change from Workplace Advisory Committee to Safe@Work Committees. Other minor changes.
14	February 2020	Manager WHS	Document updated to include reference of mental health in SWC Functions section
15	March 2023	Manager WHS	Scheduled Review. Minor Updates. Removal of SWC Survey as it is no longer used.