

## School or service safety advisor (SSA) role

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### 1. Scope

This document provides information to School or Service Safety Advisors (SSAs) on their role. The sections below address each of the health and safety functions of a SSA and outlines in detail how to carry out these tasks. Further advice is available in detailed guidance documents available from the Health and Safety Office website (1).

## 2. School or service safety advisor (SSA) functions

The role of the School or Service Safety Advisor is to create and maintain the health and safety management system for the School and Service on behalf of the head of school or service. This document contains guidance on how the SSA can achieve this. The guidance outlines the key functions; please note that these may not be comprehensive as the role may be enhanced depending on the needs of the service outlined by your manager.

1. reviewing and amending the service local rules as necessary;
2. ensuring that accidents, dangerous incidents, near miss reports and reports of occupational ill health are investigated and reports made to the Director of Health and Safety;
3. receiving notifications of conditions or working practices that are perceived as unsafe or unhealthy or other suggestions for improvement from trade union appointed safety representatives;
4. having an effective system in place to ensure that staff receive a health and safety induction ;
5. arranging for formal safety inspections to be carried out that covers every workplace, with the production of a written report;
6. devising and monitoring the procedure for the completion of display screen equipment risk assessments;
7. devising and monitoring the procedure for the maintenance of portable electrical appliances;
8. completing generic risk assessments for office activities and ensuring records of these and records of testing and maintenance are kept as necessary;
9. attending the school or service health and safety committee or presenting an agenda item at staff meetings to ensure effective communication and consulting of health and safety matters
10. liaising with the University Health and Safety Office and the Facilities Manager;
11. maintaining liaison with trade union and appointed safety representatives on safety matters; and
12. reporting on achieved health and safety performance and any identified concerns to the Head of School or Divisional Head.

## 3. Role in detail

### 3.1 Local rules document

The local rules document is produced to communicate the health, safety and welfare arrangements of the school or service to members of staff. The document will outline the responsibilities of key figures such as the dean, head of school or service, faculty manager and the SSA. The local rules must be effectively communicated to all staff and, where appropriate, students. It is good practice that members of staff sign to confirm that they have read and understood the contents; this can be achieved during the induction of any new members of staff. Any amendments can be brought

to the attention of staff during local meetings and this should be the responsibility of their line manager.

It is the role of the SSA to:

- complete the local rules document before it is signed off by the Head of School or Service and, where applicable, the School Manager. This can be completed by amending the local rules template available on the Health and Safety Office web site;
- add the school or service health and safety organisational arrangements for health and safety to the document. This can be achieved by inserting a chart naming individuals with safety responsibilities that shows the reporting structure;
- review and update the local rules document as necessary, at least annually or due to any changes in staff or procedures.

### **3.2 Reporting of accidents, incidents or near misses**

An accident is defined as any unplanned event which led, or could have led, to injury of persons, property damage or harm to the environment. All accidents and incidents must be reported to the Health and Safety Office and a University accident report form completed (see <http://www.bris.ac.uk/safety/guidance>).

Completing the accident and incident form and the role of the SSA in this process:

1. Section 1 of the accident and incident report form will normally be completed by the person with supervisory responsibility for the area and then signed by the injured person or the person reporting the event.
2. The form should then be passed to the appropriate head of school/service or faculty manager who, with the aid of the SSA if necessary, should carry out an investigation of the event and complete section 2. The SSA can sign the accident and incident report form in the absence of the head of school or service. The report should then be sent to the Health and Safety Office.
3. The SSA should inform the relevant trade union safety representative of the event as appropriate. A trade union safety representative may be involved in any investigation or inspection of the workplace.
4. Any injury which is serious or likely to lead to lost time from work should be reported to the Health and Safety Office immediately by telephone (0117 92 88780). This should be done by the injured person's line manager or if more appropriate by their head of school or service.
5. An advisor from the Health and Safety Office will ensure that any necessary reports are submitted to the Health and Safety Executive required by The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). For accidents that are reportable under RIDDOR a member of the Health and Safety Office will usually initiate and compete a full accident investigation.
6. A procedure regarding action to be taken in the event of the death of a member

of staff or student is outlined in the Incident and Crisis Management Framework website (2).

7. For environmental incidents the Health and Safety Office will pass the data to Sustainability for action as appropriate.
8. The SSA must ensure that an accident and incident form is returned to the Health and Safety Office if they have received a report of a dangerous occurrence. For dangerous occurrences that are of a high hazard and that, if not rectified as soon as possible, could lead to an accident such as the collapse of any floor in a building or contractors working unsafely, this should be reported immediately by telephone to the Health and Safety Office (0117 92 88780).
9. The SSA should encourage staff to report accidents, incidents and dangerous occurrences - even those outside of their area where no clear line of responsibility exists (e.g. loose paving slabs). These should also be reported to the Health and Safety Office.

The Health and Safety Office is happy to answer any specific queries that you may have about accident and incident reporting.

### **3.3 Notifications from trade union health and safety representatives**

Trade union safety representatives under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 are required to record and draw the employer's attention to unsafe and unhealthy conditions. Any identified hazard, incident or complaint should first be brought to the attention of the appropriate person with a role in health and safety, for example a head of school or service, faculty manager, supervisor or school safety advisor (SSA) so that they may action an immediate solution.

The SSA on receiving an initial observation should refer it to the most appropriate person for action and ensure that the safety representative has been informed in writing as to who the concern has been referred to. For guidance on a specific concern please contact the Health and Safety Office.

If the safety representative feels that have not received an appropriate response to their concern they are entitled to bring it to the attention of the Health and Safety Office.

### **3.4 Health and safety training**

#### **3.4.1 Induction training**

Schools and services are responsible for ensuring that all new starters receive appropriate health and safety training. All new members of staff are invited to attend the University safety induction training session as soon as is reasonably practicable.

In addition to the University induction training, all new staff must receive basic local

induction training covering the key hazards and control measures in their specific workplace. Staff Development has a standard induction template that contains a health and safety checklist section (3).

It is the responsibility of the immediate line manager, not the SSA, to cover the health and safety aspects of the induction process. The SSA needs to be satisfied that there is a school or service process to ensure that health and safety is covered during induction. For some schools this may involve the SSA speaking to all new starters or delivering a group session.

All staff should receive induction training on:

- key health and safety personnel and their responsibilities;
- individual responsibilities;
- University health and safety policy;
- school or service local rules;
- emergency procedures;
- risk assessments for the role;
- main hazards in the school or service and the role including any control measures in place;
- health and safety training requirements; and
- where to get help and assistance.

### **3.4.2 More specific training**

The SSA should be aware of the range of health and safety training available as advertised through the Staff Development website and to encourage line managers and staff to make the most of these opportunities.

The Health and Safety Office will send out e-mails to the SSA outlining any vacancies in forthcoming training events and it is the role of the SSA to communicate this to relevant contacts including line managers and supervisors within their school or service.

The SSA can take the lead in liaising with the Health and Safety Office team in organising specific bespoke training courses. For example, team manual handling courses, fieldwork risk assessment or fire safety awareness. For full details of what courses may be available, contact the Health and Safety Office.

## **3.5 Formal safety inspections**

Part of the role of a SSA is to arrange and co-ordinate the process of formal inspections of the school or service workplaces.

Inspections must be undertaken and formally recorded annually or more frequently for high risk areas such as workshops or laboratories (inspection frequency is at the school or service discretion e.g. it may be more appropriate to inspect laboratories

six-monthly). Specific University policies and guidance for these areas should be referred to. Visual inspections should be ongoing with all members of staff being encouraged to immediately report any defects. Inspections should cover issues including housekeeping, electrical safety, signage and first-aid.

The role of the SSA in the suggested inspection process is:

- arranging that any inspection templates are sent out to line managers and supervisors at the agreed schedules. An inspection template for offices is available (4);
- ensuring that inspection forms are returned within a specified deadline;
- inspecting areas that are not covered by office, workshop or laboratory inspection forms, this will include kitchen and rest areas, corridors and communal areas and outside spaces (a SSA inspection template is available (5));
- producing a summary of actions for the school or service manager;
- instigating any necessary actions as agreed with the school or service manager.

### **3.6 Display screen equipment assessments**

By law the University is required to identify hazards and assess risks from the workstation and the kind of DSE work being done. It must draw valid and reliable conclusions from assessments and identify steps to reduce risks. Each school or service should have a trained DSE assessor who is able to undertake this process. The role of the DSE assessors is to ensure that workstations meet the minimum requirements and are set up correctly for all members of staff. The DSE assessor will ensure that the assessments are reviewed on a regular basis.

It is the role of the SSA to ensure that there is a system in place for achieving this. The functions of DSE assessor may be delegated elsewhere, but the role is to:

- identify hazards and assess risks from the workstation for the kind of DSE work being done;
- draw valid and reliable conclusions from assessments and identify steps to reduce risks;
- make a clear and accurate record of the assessment and communicate the findings to those who need to take appropriate action and to the colleague concerned;
- take appropriate action following the assessment to resolve any issues, the SSA is likely to be involved in implementing remedial action identified by the DSE assessments.
- call on further expertise if necessary - DSE assessors may seek advice from the Health and Safety Office or recommend staff referral to the Occupational Health Service.

Workstation self assessment must be carried out by all employees who use DSE using the DSE assessment form provided by the Health and Safety Office (6)

DSE users are entitled to eye examination and eyesight tests by a registered practitioner (optician or doctor). The role of the SSA is to manage the school or service procedure for receiving completed eye test forms from members of staff and to ensure that users are reimbursed through the expenses procedure. A user refers to any employee who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of their normal work. The regulations apply to users whether they are employed to work at their own employer's workstation, a workstation at home or when hot desking at another employee's workstation. The majority of University employees (including research post-graduate students) will be classed as DSE users.

Further information can be found in the DSE Assessors Handbook available from the Health and Safety Office website (7).

### **3.7 Maintenance of portable appliances**

Arrangements for portable electrical appliance testing (PAT) may be delegated to the SSA or carried out by another member of staff.

The regular, planned formal inspection and testing of electrical appliances will include:

- formal visual inspection for signs of damage and deterioration;
- electrical tests.

As a minimum, these electrical tests must take the form of an earth continuity and leakage test (where an earth is present) and an insulation test. The results should be recorded locally and the equipment labelled accordingly as "Passed" with an expiry or "Next test date" clearly visible.

Each school or service is responsible for implementing arrangements for PAT testing and inspection. This may be through their own resources using members of staff to undertake the tests or by engaging the services of an approved reputable external contractor. The purchasing website provides details of contractors who are able to provide this service (8).

The functions of the PAT testing officer include:

- making suitable arrangements with the contractor and communicating the schedule of testing to all staff;
- acting as the key contact for the contractor whilst on site;
- taking action as necessary to remove failed items from service;
- monitoring the contract, ensuring as far as possible that all necessary equipment is tested;
- maintaining records of testing;
- bringing to the attention of every user of electrical equipment that they have a responsibility to ensure that each time they use that equipment it has an in-date PAT label and is safe to use by doing a very brief user check (no loose wires, no

obvious damage to equipment, cable, plug or socket) - these details can be added into the local rules document.

Further guidance on PAT is available from the Health and Safety Office website (9).

### **3.8 Completing generic risk assessments**

It is not the role of the SSA to produce risk assessments for all school or service activities but to ensure that a system is outlined in the local rules for achieving this and that it has been communicated to all members of staff.

Line managers and supervisors must ensure that all activities that they manage are formally identified and appropriate risk assessments undertaken. The purpose of the risk assessment is to determine what measures should be taken to comply with relevant statutory provisions. A risk assessment must identify hazards, decide who might be harmed and how, evaluate the risks and decide on what further control measures are necessary to minimise these risks, as far as reasonably practicable. Line managers must ensure that risk assessments are recorded and that any significant hazards are communicated to relevant persons along with the arrangements that are in place for controlling any risks.

The SSA should produce risk assessments for general office-type activities. A template for these is available (10). The SSA will arrange for these to be adapted to their school or service activities and buildings. If there is any significant change, the SSA should ensure that an additional assessment is produced to take account of any new hazard. It is good practice to review risk assessments from time to time, the Health and Safety Office recommend annually. The assessments do not need to be amended for every trivial change, or for each new job, but only if a new job introduces significant new hazards of its own.

Further guidance is available from the Health and Safety Office website (11). The Health and Safety Executive has also produced example case study risk assessments (12).

### **3.9 Liaising with the University Health and Safety Office**

The SSA role includes providing a point of contact for the Health and Safety Office:

- The Health and Safety Office send out regular emails to SSA's. Information will, for example, include details of training courses that might be of interest and details of new guidance or policy on specific topics. The role of the SSA is to disseminate this information to others in the school or service, including relevant managers and supervisors to enable them to update risk assessments where necessary.
- The SSA may receive queries relating to any accident or incident that has been submitted to the Health and Safety Executive as required by the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). For accidents that are reportable under RIDDOR a member of the Health and Safety



Office will usually complete a full accident investigation and the SSA will act as the contact person for gathering relevant information.

- The SSA will act as the contact person for any Occupational Health Service (OHS) referrals. For example, the SSA can refer a colleague to the OHS for a workstation referral following a DSE assessment if further advice is needed for a health condition that may be related to the use of DSE. Any other type of referral for example for fitness or return to work will need to come from the line manager in liaison with the Human Resources Manager.
- The OHS will send any information to the SSA regarding any health surveillance carried out within the school or service. The first stage of any health surveillance programme is to identify the hazards to health in the workplace through risk assessment. Examples of hazards might include noise, vibration or biological agents. If the hazard cannot be completely controlled and risks remain, then further steps need to be taken to protect employees. One of these steps is to consider health surveillance. Once a risk assessment has identified a need for health surveillance managers or SSAs can refer employees to the OHS by completing a referral form. Further details are available on the Occupational Health Service website (13).
- Although the Health and Safety Office is happy to speak directly to staff or students regarding any health and safety concerns, it can be much more effective if these are first raised with their line managers or supervisors and the SSA then acts as the point of contact with the Health and Safety Office.

### **3.10 Maintaining liaison with trade union representatives**

The University recognises the importance of trade unions in the creation of an effective health and safety management system and is committed to consultation and dialogue in order to achieve this aim. Safety representatives are appointed by the local branch of the trade union concerned.

The role of the SSA includes ensuring as far as possible that any local school or service trade union safety representative is consulted on any health and safety matter. Safety representatives have the right to:

- investigate potential hazards and causes of accidents;
- investigate employee's complaints;
- inspect workplaces;
- inspect statutory documents;
- be consulted on aspects of health and safety (this can be achieved by inviting the trade union representative to school or service health and safety meetings and by providing copies of any relevant minutes).

Trade union safety representatives have a very important role to play as it is proven that worker involvement and consultation is a key part of improving and maintaining a healthy and safe workplace.

The process of formal consultation on matters of University health and safety policy is made through the Health and Safety Consultative Committee. School or service health and safety committees provide the opportunity for further consultation and contribution to the effective management of health and safety.

### **3.11 Health and safety audits**

Health and Safety Office audits concentrate on assessing the effectiveness of school or service procedures in meeting the requirements of University health and safety policy and therefore satisfying statutory provisions. Auditing and monitoring are therefore essential management tools in the implementation and development of safety systems and promoting a good health and safety culture at the University.

The objectives of health and safety auditing are to:

- provide evidence and assurance to Council that the University is satisfying statutory requirements;
- enable evaluation of management systems, determine any deficiencies and action cost-effective and efficient solutions;
- check practices against procedures and to document any differences;
- identify new or improved standards, guidance or policies which could promote a safer environment within the University.

The main areas to be audited will be the school or service local rules document and risk assessments. Therefore the SSA has a pivotal role in the process. It is expected that the SSA will represent the school or service at the time of the audit accompanied by, if applicable, any other member of staff that has any specific health and safety duties. This might include a Radiation Protection Supervisor or local Biological Safety Officer.

A blank audit form template is available on the Health and Safety Office website for information and guidance (14).

Training to prepare for the audit is available from the Health and Safety Office with further details and dates advertised on the Staff Development website (15)

### **3.12 Health and safety reporting**

The Head of School/Service with their responsibility for ensuring a safe and healthy working environment will need to report on performance. Therefore may require the SSA to outline or report on any health and safety achievements, activities or concerns.

If required it is recommended that the following headings along with any other information relevant to the area should form part of an annual report.

1. Accidents and incidents:

- total number and split into categories;
- RIDDOR accidents and dangerous occurrences;
- management action required.

2. Fires:

- total numbers;
- alarm activations.

3. Audit:

- scores and summary actions;
- date of next audit.

4. Training:

- total numbers and type of courses attended;
- recommendations.

5. Occupational health:

- staff referral numbers;
- workstation assessments.

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