

University of Oxford

Safety Executive Group (SEG)

SEG GN05 *The role of aligned University Committees*

What are aligned University Committees?

This guidance note sets out the proposed role of relevant committees in contributing to the University's safety management system and safety culture. These committees are 'aligned' to SEG and may be expected to participate in health, safety, and environment processes where an issue falls within their particular area of expertise.

Who does this Guidance Note apply to?

Aligned committees for the purpose of this guidance note are as follows:

- Building and Estates Subcommittee
- Education Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Research Committee
- Divisional health and safety committees (where these exist)

The guidance note explains the circumstances in which the participation of these committees might be sought and the support that would be made available to enable a committee's participation in the safety management process.

What is the legislation?

The University has a legal duty to consult with its employees on health and safety matters. This is covered by two sets of legislation: Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (as amended) and Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996. For further information see [link](#). The trade unions (UCU, Unison and Unite) represent all staff in these discussions, regardless of membership. The CCHS terms of reference also extend to students and specific roles. CCHS links with the University's management by an open-channel to SEG, receiving information on its activities and decisions.

SEG briefing notes in this series

- SEG GN01 *Guide to SEG organisation and operating principles.*
- SEG GN02 *Guide to the Consultative Committee for Health and Safety (CCHS).*
- SEG GN03 *Guide to the Safety Network (how to access competent advice).*
- SEG GN04 *Guide to action-oriented safety.*
- SEG GN05 *Guide to the role of aligned University Committees within the safety management system.*
- SEG GN06 *Guide to the role of Topic Advisory Groups within the safety management system.*

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Introduction

This briefing note provides an update on the impact from on-going changes to the health and safety governance and reporting structure on established University committees whose agenda includes relevant issues impacting on health, safety or environmental issues. These committees can be seen as aligned to the newly formed Safety Executive Group (SEG), and these aligned committees may be expected to participate in the health, safety and environment processes where the committees are best placed to address a relevant issue. Aligned committees for the purposes of this briefing note are as follows:

- Building and Estates Subcommittee
- Education Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Research Committee
- Divisional health and safety committees (where these exist).

The briefing note explains the circumstances where this would be appropriate, and the support that would be made available to the committee to enable that participation in the safety management process.

Structure of this guidance

The proposed role of aligned university committees is considered under the following headings;

1. Summary of governance and reporting structure
2. How the aligned committees can be expected to contribute to the safety management system
3. Other relevant committees
4. Support available to aligned committees

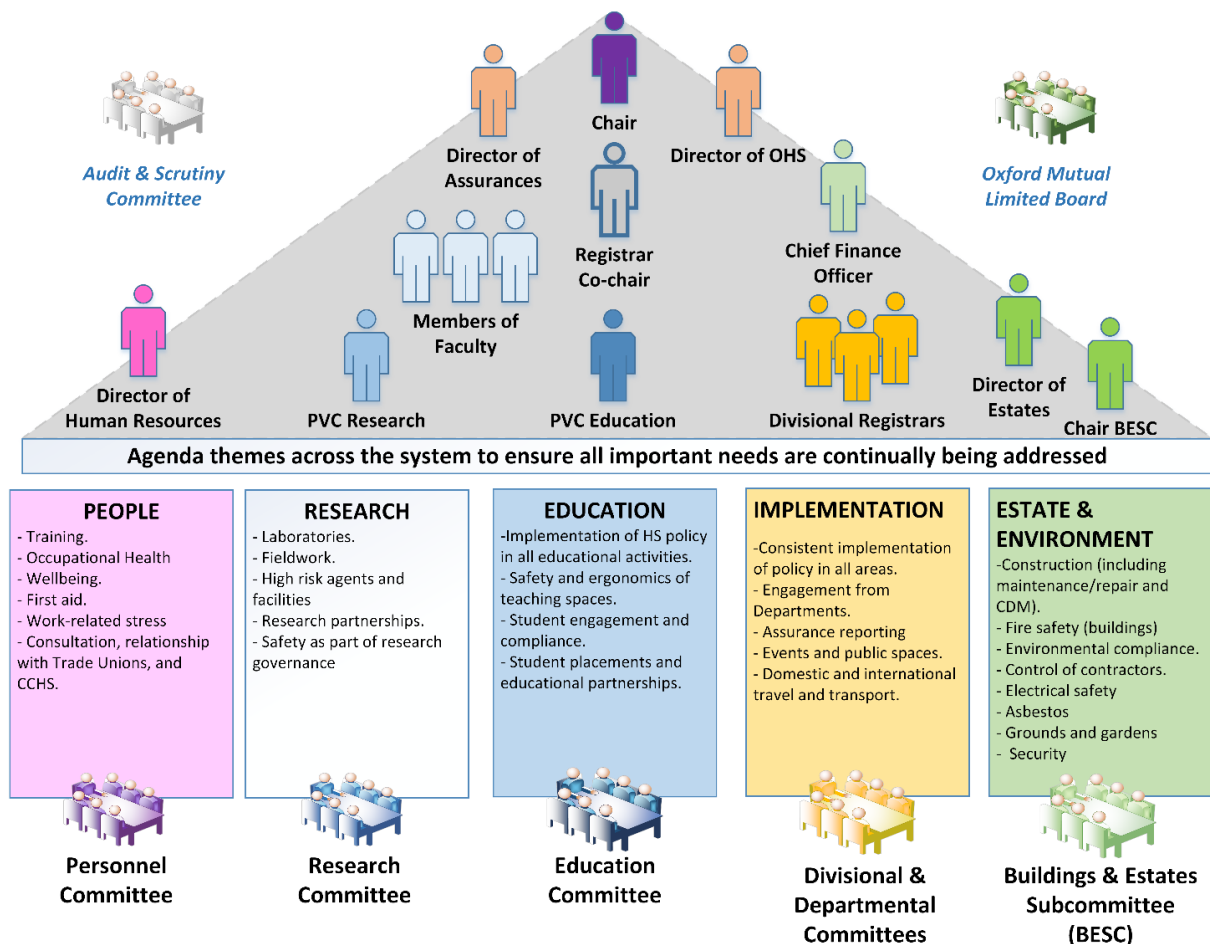
Annex A Details of the reporting and governance structure.

1) [Summary of governance and reporting structure](#)

- a) The governance and reporting structure for the purposes of health, safety, and environment was revised as part of the response to the Health and Safety Review. This was seen as necessary to improve engagement in safety across the University, to develop a more effective set of arrangements, and to address what was reported to be a passive safety culture.
- b) A brief summary of the revised governance and reporting structure is provided below for the purposes of understand the role of aligned university committees. Further details are available in Annex A, and other guidance developed as part of the SEG GN series (see front cover for details).
- c) The governance and reporting structure establishes that Council have ultimate responsibility for health, safety and environmental issues across the University, and thereafter establishes a chain of command to all parts of the University. There is a key role for a newly established Safety Executive Group (SEG).
- d) The SEG is supported by the Safety Network, which ensures access to competent professional advice and other support, and long-established Health and Safety Consultative Committee (CCHS) undertakes consultation with stakeholders (including the Trade Unions). The interaction between these three groups is a key feature of the University safety management system. Implementation of safety policy, and the processes that support the safety management system, are expected at divisional, departmental, team, and individual levels.
- e) The SEG is organised to provide leadership across the University, and makes decisions that influence both strategic and operational priorities. Figure 1 below shows the membership of SEG, also a set of **agenda themes** that are used to ensure consistent consideration of a range of important area of university activity (*people, education, research, implementation of policy and estates and environment*).
- f) The agenda themes influence how the Safety Executive Group (SEG) will be organised and operate, and members of the SEG will be aligned to specific themes due to their normal area of academic or professional responsibilities. For example, Director HR will be aligned to the agenda theme People, and PVC Research aligned to the theme of Research etc.
- g) Where there is an existing University committee already addressing areas of activity that could reasonably be seen as relevant to the safety issue under consideration, there will be benefits from aligning the work of that committee with the work being undertaken within the SEG. On this basis, these committees can be seen as aligned, and they may be expected to participate in the safety management processes.
- h) The SEG will communicate the new arrangements to the chairs of the aligned committees, and it is anticipated that support will be made available to those chairs and the committees from the Director of Occupational Health and Safety (and from other parts of the Safety Network where appropriate). See section 4 below for further details on the support that will be made available.

Safety Executive Group – Role of aligned university committees (July 2023)

Figure 1. The membership of the Safety Executive Group (SEG), the agenda themes, and aligned university committees.



2) The role of the aligned university committees

- a) Aligned university committees are formally constituted committees that sit for a specific purpose (personnel matters, education, research etc), but who will have some interest in health and safety where it impacts on the committees remit. Examples of safety issues expected to be of interest to aligned committees are set out in table 1 below.
- b) In some cases, an aligned committee may be the appropriate place for detailed engagement in a health and safety issue. In other circumstances, the SEG may be interested in work being undertaken in other aligned committees. In this respect, aligned committees can be seen as part of the safety management system, and it will be appropriate for there to be good levels of engagement and co-ordination.
- c) The nominated SEG lead for each theme (personnel, research, education etc) is expected to already have a role as a member of the aligned committee. Where it is beneficial, the Director OHS will attend aligned committees and establish partnership working arrangements.
- d) Examples of the interaction between SEG and the aligned committees include:
 - i) The aligned committees could be asked by SEG to lead on specific safety issues where that committee would be well positioned to deliver the desired outcome.
 - ii) The aligned committee could propose an issue to be considered at SEG. See vii below.
 - iii) The aligned committee could become involved in matters being discussed within the Consultative Committee for Health and Safety (CCHS).
 - iv) Aligned committees would be able to access the same competent advice and other support that is available to assist the SEG and the CCHS. Further detail on this support is provided below.
 - v) Committees may choose to form informal task-and-finish groups or other subgroups to work on safety-related issues outside the main committee process.
 - vi) Aligned committees might be requested to contribute to the annual report to Council or other exercises which seek to report the status of the safety management system and culture.
 - vii) The aligned committee can raise issues with the SEG as follows:
 - (1) Items relating to non-urgent or low risk issues can be presented to SEG as AOB items (initially being sent to Director of Occupational Health and Safety). The DOHS will either prepare to provide a verbal update at the meeting, or prepare an appropriate document for consideration.
 - (2) More urgent items, and proposals that have already been developed enough to be considered by SEG will be included in the next available SEG agenda.

- (3) Where a need identified either in the aligned committee or elsewhere, and there is potential for a noteworthy change to the policies or safety management system and processes that support it, a SEG proposal will be developed by the DOHS in consultation with the relevant chair of the aligned committee. This will then follow the six-part process, during which SEG will determine where the next stages of development and implementation will be best addressed.
- (4) Some worked examples of how aligned committees could support SEG are presented below.

<p>SEG identifies a need that can be addressed in an aligned committee</p> <p>Example. SEG identify that there is a need for work-related stress policy that is closely aligned to other issues of interest to Personnel Committee.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposal is developed within SEG, and the SEG lead nominated. 2. The Director OHS and the nominated SEG lead share the proposal for the selected aligned committee (in the example-Personnel Committee) to undertake the work with the Chair of the aligned committee (eg BESC, Personnel Committee) 3. Subject to agreement by the chair of the aligned committee a scope of work and proposed timeline is agreed. 4. Director of OHS confirms the specific support that will be made available from the Safety Network into the aligned committee. 5. Once the aligned committee have developed the detailed proposal for action, new policy or other outcome, the SEG lead and the DOHS will take this back into SEG for consideration and decision. 6. Chairs of both SEG and the aligned committee agree on the longer term action in the respective groups to achieve implementation, to periodically review, and to ensure the issue will continue to be addressed successfully.
<p>An aligned committee have recognised an improvement need, and develop the detailed proposal for consideration at SEG.</p> <p>Example BESC identify a need to improve a process to standardised safety across the estate. The proposal is expected to impact on divisions and departments.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In this case, the aligned committee will have already been supported by the DOHS and the Safety Network to produce the proposal in the required format. 2. SEG consider the proposal from the aligned committee (with the option to nominate a SEG lead) but in any case take the proposal through the six step process to the point that a decision on implementation can be made. 3. Chairs of both SEG and the aligned committee agree on the longer term action in the respective groups to achieve implementation, to periodically review, and to ensure the issue will continue to be addressed successfully.

Table 1. Alignment of SEG agenda across established university committees

Agenda theme	SEG lead	Aligned committee	SEG related issue expected to be discussed
People	Director of Human Resources	Personnel Committee	Training and staff development, occupational health (OH), interface between safety and wellbeing, first-aid, work-related stress, consultation and the relationship with the trade unions (Director HR chairs the Consultative Committee for Health and Safety)..
Research	PVC Research	Research Committee (TBC)	Laboratory safety, fieldwork, high risk agents and specialised facilities, research partnerships, safety as part of research governance (the Research Concordat).
Education	PVC Education	Education Committee(TBC)	Implementation of HS policy in all educational activities, safety and ergonomics of teaching spaces, student engagement and compliance, students placements and educational partnerships.
Implementation (of policy)	Divisional Registrars	Local Divisional committees or equivalent arrangements	Consistent implementation of policy in all areas, engagement from departments, assurance reporting, safety of events and public spaces, domestic and international travel.
Estates and environment	Director of Estates the Chair of Buildings and Estates Subcommittee	Buildings and Estates Subcommittee	Construction (including maintenance and repair and all CDM ¹ work), fire safety, control of contractors, environmental compliance, electrical safety, asbestos, grounds and gardens, security, transport and pedestrian safety.

3) Other relevant committees

- a) It is important to note that in addition to the aligned committees, there are other University level committees that will be discussing issues related to health, safety and environmental risk, and as such there may be circumstances where these committees could be expected to contribute to the safety management system. The other significant committees are:
- i) Audit and Scrutiny Committee
 - ii) Security subcommittee
 - iii) Oxford Mutual Board
 - iv) General Purposes Committee (not in the chain of command for HS but still expected to receive reports)
- b) Each of these other committees will be updated periodically on relevant issues being discussed in SEG, and on the key decisions made.

¹ Constructions, Design and Management (CDM) Regulations.

4) Support for aligned committees from the SHE network

- a) Aligned committees are not expected to have membership that would include competent health and safety advisors. This support is available to an aligned committee from the SHE Network, an extensive community of practice that co-ordinates the deployment of professional safety advice and other support across the University.
- b) The SHE network is co-ordinated by the Director of Occupational Health and Safety (DOHS), with key roles at the centre of this network for the Safety Office, the Area and Divisional Safety Officers, and the Estates Compliance Team. Full details of the SHE network, and guidance on how to access competent advice, will be provided via a dedicated series of briefing notes currently under development.
- c) Where an aligned committee are engaged by the SEG in a safety related issue, the Director of Occupational Health and Safety (DOHS) will meet with the chair of the committee or their representative to agree an approach, and to confirm how competent professional advice and other support will be made available to the committee. In practice it is anticipated that the support available to chairs of aligned committees will consist of the following. The work is essentially supported by activities undertaken by the Safety Office or members of the safety network:
 - i) A detailed summary of the expected outputs from the committee (new policy, process etc).
 - ii) The development within the safety network of the detailed proposal to include an impact assessment.
 - iii) Organising a subgroup of aligned committee members or other representatives to give consideration to the issue under consideration.
 - iv) Organising and reporting an appropriate level of pre-consultation with stakeholders.
 - v) Production of data and reports or other materials to support the outputs
 - vi) Development of the formal proposal paper to go back into SEG for consideration.

Annex A Figure 1. Governance and reporting structure

