

Health and Safety Benchmarking



This is one of a series of advice sheets for members of NEU Leadership - senior leaders in education in membership of the National Education Union. These advice sheets aim to give you advice on your position as an employee, which reflects your particular position as a leader and manager.

You can read other NEU advice and find out more about NEU Leadership, about the NEU's model of ethical leadership in education and about the NEU's Guild Community, which offers you peer support from fellow NEU Leadership members, at neu.org.uk/leadership

H&S benchmarking - an assessment tool for educational settings

This assessment tool was devised by the Further Education Safety & Health (FESH). FESH was a joint stakeholder forum of FE college representative bodies, trade unions and agencies which constituted a partnership to provide strategic oversight and direction on occupational health and safety matters affecting staff and students.

This assessment tool was drawn up by FESH to provide education institutions with a strategy to help them meet their health and safety responsibilities. Now that FESH is no longer in operation, the NEU is publishing this document in order to build on this collective work and bring it to a new and wider audience of educational leaders.

About the assessment tool

The assessment tool has been designed to complement the Health and Safety Executives (HSE) national strategy for health and safety. The tool sets out recommendations on how educational institutions should interpret each HSE strategy goal, and evidence their practice and progress for evaluation within the institution.

The examples are not exhaustive, and individual institutions may wish to add to or amend them according to their local circumstances.

The NEU believes that this tool can be valuable in supporting leaders to benchmark their institution's practices on its management of health and safety. The tool can also be used to engage staff and local H&S reps within the school or college to learn, improve and advance the profile of health, safety and well-being within the workplace.

In need of support?

If you need support on any issue facing you as an employee, please contact your workplace NEU rep or [contact your local NEU branch](#) or call the NEU adviceline at 0345 811 8111 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 7pm) or adviceline@neu.org.uk

If there is a specific issue not covered in this or other advice sheets which you would like the NEU to look at, or if you simply want to let the union know about something from an NEU leader's perspective, then please contact the NEU's National Official (Leadership) Steve Cooper on steve.cooper@neu.org.uk

Assessment Tool for Further Education

HSE strategy goal	School or college 'goal' interpretation	Evidence example	Evaluation			
			1	2	3	4
<p>1. To encourage strong leadership in championing the importance of, and a common-sense approach to, health and safety in the workplace.</p>	<p>Corporation members and senior management are aware of their responsibilities for health and safety, which are considered in strategic decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Health and safety appears regularly on the agenda for Corporation/SMT/JCNC meetings. ■ The College's policy sets out the responsibilities of Senior Management in leading on health and safety. ■ Appraisals of senior managers include an assessment of their contribution to health and safety performance. ■ An annual report on health and safety and wellbeing performance is published by SMT. 				
<p>2. To encourage an increase in competence, which will enable greater ownership and profiling of risk, thereby promoting sensible and proportionate risk management.</p>	<p>Managers, supervisors and safety representatives at all levels are competent to recognise and manage their significant health and safety risks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Agreed competency levels for managers and supervisors. ■ Agreed competency levels for corporation members enabling them to question the health and safety performance of the college. ■ Agreed awareness levels and provision of information for union safety representatives. ■ Facilities for safety representatives to access relevant training. ■ Competent health and safety assistance is available. ■ H&S is incorporated into course curricula. 				

HSE strategy goal		School or college 'goal' interpretation		Evidence example		Evaluation	
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3. To motivate focus on the core aims of health and safety and by doing so help risk-makers and managers distinguish between real health and safety issues and trivial or ill-informed criticism.	A sensible/proportionate approach to health and safety is encouraged; and those who attempt to use health and safety as a means for inaction or not managing a situation are actively challenged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured communication from informed sources of health and safety related information. A positive healthy and safety culture is encouraged, based on a proportionate response to managing risks, and which is not totally risk averse. Risk management arrangements and procedures are shared and developed with contractors, partners and other related organisations as appropriate. 					
4. To reinforce the promotion of worker involvement and consultation in health and safety matters throughout unionised and non-unionised workplaces of all sizes.	Arrangements are established that value, encourage and promote workforce involvement in the management of health and safety issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and safety a regular topic for Employee JCNCS etc. Trade union membership encouraged. Recognised unions encouraged to elect safety representatives. Union safety representatives encouraged to contribute to workplace risk assessment, inspections and investigations as appropriate. Positive facilities arrangements enabling union safety representatives to perform their duties. 					
5. To specifically target key health issues and to identify and work with those bodies best placed to bring about a reduction in the incidence rate and number of cases of work-related ill health.	Arrangements are put in place to actively target key health issues that will reduce incidents of work-related ill health; with priority areas being stress, musculoskeletal disorders, dermatitis and asbestosis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competent occupational health provision including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Planned health surveillance, ii) Provision of counselling and physiotherapy services, iii) Health risk profiling Senior managers operate an effective change management programme and demonstrate effective leadership to secure the wellbeing of the workforce. Effective implementation of the HSE Stress management standards. 					

HSE strategy goal		School or college 'goal' interpretation		Evidence example		Evaluation			
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6. To adapt and customise approaches to help the increasing number of SMEs in different sectors comply with their health and safety obligations	Demonstrate an exemplary approach to risk management to SME contractors, suppliers, partners and service providers within the supply chain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The college acts as exemplar to partners, contractors and service-providers working on its behalf and sets out the benchmark standard to be achieved within the contract for SMEs providing services or equipment. The college regularly monitors the performance of SMEs working as partners, contractors and service providers and provides feedback as appropriate. 							
7. To set priorities and, within those priorities, identify which activities, at what length and scale, deliver a significant reduction in the rate and number of deaths and accidents.	Priorities are established that ensure that resources are directed/targeted to maximise reductions in accidents, injuries and deaths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk profiling is carried out and the results used to identify local safety priorities. Targets for incident/accident reduction are set out within policy/business plans. 							
8. To take account of wider issues that impact on health and safety as part of the continuing drive to improve Great Britain's health and safety performance.	The health and safety arrangements of students, partners, key suppliers and contractors are assessed and, where necessary, requirements specified to secure good practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College encourages management involvement in regional and national forums. Health and safety assessments are undertaken for college courses and research making use of specialist input as necessary to secure good practice. Health and safety assessments are undertaken for all partners, suppliers and contractors within procurement exercises. Joint policies, arrangements and working practices are introduced for relevant partnerships. 							

Score	Assessment	Findings / conclusion	Action required
1	Disagree strongly	Significant gaps / weaknesses exist or controls non-effective (generally non-compliant)	Actions are identified to secure improvements, improved effectiveness and compliance / improved compliance.
2	Disagree slightly	Some gaps / weaknesses exist or controls only partly effective (partial compliance)	Actions are identified to secure improvements, better effectiveness and compliance and evidence is signposted in support of areas of compliance.
3	Agree slightly	Some minor gaps / weaknesses exist but generally strengths outweigh weaknesses and controls are generally effective (generally compliant)	Evidence is signposted in support of areas of compliance and effectiveness and actions are identified to secure improvements in effectiveness and compliance.
4	Agree strongly	Very few or no gaps / weaknesses exist and controls are effective (compliant)	Evidence is signposted in support of areas of excellent effectiveness and compliance.

Assessment Tool for Further Education

HSE strategy goal	Recommended further action to meet strategic goal	Date to be completed	Person responsible	Date completed
1 To encourage strong leadership in championing the importance of, and a common-sense approach to, health and safety in the workplace.				
2 To encourage an increase in competence, which will enable greater ownership and profiling of risk, thereby promoting sensible and proportionate risk management.				
3 To motivate focus on the core aims of health and safety and, by doing so, to help risk makers and managers distinguish between real health and safety issues and trivial or ill-informed criticism.				
4 To reinforce the promotion of worker involvement and consultation in health and safety matters throughout unionised and non-unionised workplaces of all sizes.				
5 To specifically target key health issues and to identify and work with those bodies best placed to bring about a reduction in the incidence rate and number of cases of work-related ill health.				

6	To adapt and customise approaches to help the increasing number of SMEs in different sectors comply with their health and safety obligations.				
7	To set priorities and, within those priorities, to identify which activities, their length and scale, deliver a significant reduction in the rate and number of deaths and accidents.				
8	To take account of wider issues that impact on health and safety as part of the continuing drive to improve Great Britain's health and safety performance.				