

Work, Health and Safety Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) The University of Newcastle (the University) is committed to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, a physically and psychosocially safe and healthy work environment. The Work Health Safety (WHS) Policy (Policy) enables the University to meet its responsibilities and accountabilities for work health and safety by ensuring compliance with the New South Wales [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) (WHS Act), associated regulations, standards, and codes of practice.

(2) In pursuit of the University's strategic objectives of the [Looking Ahead Strategic Plan \(2020 - 2025\)](#) and within the strategic priority of Inspiring People, the [Wellbeing, Health and Safety Strategy](#) (2020-2025) defines the University's key priorities to build and maintain an environment where our people are valued, empowered, safe, healthy, and well. The [Wellbeing, Health and Safety Charter \(2020-2025\)](#) describes our commitment to a culture of care and continuous safety improvement.

(3) The University's [Health and Safety Management System \(HSMS\) Framework](#) inclusive of this Policy, supporting elements, guidelines and key risk area procedures give effect to the primary duty to provide a safe workplace.

Section 2 - Principles

(4) The University's [Student Code of Conduct](#) and [Staff Code of Conduct](#) principles are honesty, fairness, trust, accountability, and respect. It is expected that the University community will apply the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and [Staff Code of Conduct](#) principles in the complying with the WHS principles of this Policy. The WHS Principles include:

a. Leadership:

- i. leadership, accountability, and governance oversight;
- ii. allocation of resources, both financial and physical, to enable our staff to work safely and in accordance with legislation, management is accountable for driving and demonstrating health, safety and wellness in the workplace;

b. Consultation and communication:

- i. to consult, where reasonably practicable, on matters relating to health and safety;
- ii. establish mechanisms for consultation and actively support of the Health and Safety Committees and discipline specific sub-committees in the development, maintenance and improvement of a safe work environment;
- iii. effectively communicate our health, safety and wellness expectations to all visitors, partners, contractors, volunteers and other relevant parties.

c. Risk management & Reporting:

- i. maintain work health and safety risk management processes that are proportionate, evidence informed and aligned with the risk appetite statement as determined by the Risk Committee of Council.
- ii. Consistent with the [Risk Management Policy](#) and [Risk Management Framework](#), this includes identification and control of WHS risks, applying actions to reduce the likelihood and consequence of risk; maintenance of safe systems of work to ensure continuous improvement in safety; audit and review of

health and safety management systems; ensuring adequate reporting mechanisms are implemented and maintained at all levels;

d. Training:

- i. ensure people are trained and competent through provision of appropriate information, training, instruction, and supervision including Officers, workers (including those with specific and specialised duties), students, contractors and visitors to our campuses;

e. Safe environments:

- i. application of safe work design principles to the University operating structure and work environments such that they minimise and where possible eliminate the risk of physical and psychological harm;
- ii. it is unacceptable for people to be harmed in the course of their endeavours at the University;

f. Support and recovery:

- i. mechanisms for early intervention to minimise harm;
- ii. appropriate response to incidents;
- iii. ensure compensation and support in the event of workplace injury;

g. Wellbeing:

- i. a healthy workplace culture where the improvement of safety and the support of individual wellbeing is promoted and embraced.

(5) The University cares about the health, safety, and wellbeing of all staff, students and visitors who engage with us and attend our campuses, as well as our staff and students engaging in off campus research, teaching and service related activities. The [Wellbeing, Health and Safety Strategy \(2020-2025\)](#) describes our vision to move “beyond zero” as we aim to prevent ill health and injury and promote and support our people. In moving “beyond zero” our goal is to create and maintain an environment where open communication and trust fosters a culture of care and positive health and safety outcomes. The key priorities of the Strategy promote:

- a. a values-based culture;
- b. strong safety leadership;
- c. a focus on wellness;
- d. robust systems; and
- e. risk management and safe and supportive environments.

Section 3 - Health and Safety Management System Framework

(6) The University's [Health and Safety Management System \(HSMS\) framework](#) consists of this WHS policy, HSMS elements, guidelines, and key risk areas.

(7) The HSMS Framework provides direction and supporting materials to enable people to carry out their work safely. It is compliant with the relevant WHS legislation and Codes of Practice and, where appropriate, consistent with Australian and International standards, and compliant with other relevant regulatory requirements.

(8) Our Colleges and Divisions will align their relevant safety processes and procedures to ensure consistency with the University HSMS Framework.

(9) Our HSMS Framework is maintained and continuously monitored for effectiveness and compliance by the Health Safety and Wellbeing Team. This Policy is reviewed every 2 years in consultation with stakeholders.

Section 4 - Roles and Responsibilities

(10) The University recognises that every person has the right to a safe and healthy working environment and all persons share a responsibility to co-operate in the maintenance and improvement of work health and safety across all University activities.

(11) The University has a primary duty of care under the [WHS Act](#) and must meet its health and safety responsibilities, as must all workers.

(12) Further detail of the roles and responsibilities as they relate to work health and safety can be found in the HSMS, specifically [HSG 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities](#).

(13) The following key roles are defined by the WHS legislation.

Officers

(14) An Officer is defined by the [WHS Act](#) as a person who makes decisions, or participates in making decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of the University operations.

(15) An Officer must exercise due diligence to ensure the University complies with its duty of care and any obligations defined by the WHS legislation. They must take reasonable steps to:

- a. maintain up-to-date knowledge of the WHS legislation and its application;
- b. understand the general nature of the University and the hazards and risks associated with its operations;
- c. ensure that the University applies appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety from work;
- d. ensure they receive and consider information regarding incidents, hazards and risks and respond in a timely way to that information;
- e. ensure there are processes for complying with any duty or obligation; and
- f. verify the provision and use of the resources and processes described above.

Workers

(16) A person is a worker by definition of the [Work Health and Safety Act](#), if they carry out work in any capacity for the University. This includes an employee (staff), a contractor or subcontractor, an employee of a labour hire company, an apprentice or trainee, a student gaining work experience or a volunteer.

(17) So far as reasonably practicable, the University will involve workers, through agreed consultation arrangements, in the decisions that affect worker health and safety.

(18) In the interest of health and safety, all workers must:

- a. take reasonable steps to ensure their own health and safety;
- b. comply and cooperate with reasonable instruction, policy, procedures, and guidelines of the University in relation to health and safety; and
- c. take reasonable care such that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of another.

Section 5 - Scope and application

(19) This policy applies to:

- a. all staff, students, visitors (including volunteers and contractors), Council members, and other persons interacting with the University of Newcastle (workers);
- b. the operations and staff of University aligned Research Centres and controlled entities; and
- c. all activities conducted by or on behalf of the University of Newcastle, on and outside of the University's campuses.

(20) All members of the University community have a collective and individual responsibility to work safely and engage in activities to help prevent and report physical and psychological injuries and illness.

(21) Failure to comply with this Policy may lead to disciplinary action, including the possibility of termination of employment or exclusion from the University. Unlawful conduct as it relates to work health and safety could result in Regulatory prosecution (Safework NSW) and criminal proceedings.

Status and Details

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Effective Date	8th December 2022
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Responsible Executive	Martin Sainsbury Chief People and Culture Officer martin.sainsbury@newcastle.edu.au
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Council member" - A person who is a member of the University Council as described in Section 8B of the University of Newcastle Act, 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Risk management" - The co-ordination of activities to optimise the management of potential opportunities and reduce the consequence or impact of adverse effects or events.

"Risk appetite" - An organisation's approach to assess and eventually pursue, retain, take or turn away from risk.

"Campus" - means any place or premises owned or controlled by the University, but may also specifically refer to a designated operating location such as the Callaghan Campus.

"Controlled entity" - Has the same meaning as in section 16A of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Disciplinary action" - When used in relation to staff of the University, this is as defined in the applicable and current Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, or the staff member's employment contract. When used in relation to students of the University, this is as defined in the Student Conduct Rule.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.