

Understanding Health & Safety

Key considerations for health & safety compliance within Student Opportunities

This guidance document will identify basic considerations for managing risk and understanding health and safety. It also signposts to websites containing more advanced resources.

Introduction

Managing health and safety is an area of work that takes up much staff time in students' union as it is technical and specific to your own situations and activities. NUS cannot advise on mitigating risk within individual students' union, however this guidance document is designed to signpost to useful advice for managing health and safety in Student Opportunities activities.

This guidance document has been produced by the Student Opportunities team at NUS as it is often Student Opportunities staff in students' union who manage the risks involved with activities and advise student leaders on how best to promote health and safety in their activities.

However it is not the sole responsibility of Student Opportunities staff to manage the students' union health and safety procedures, and it is advised that the Trustees board and senior management team are involved in this.

Practical steps

1. Find and read the students' union health and safety policy and procedures, and identify the staff member responsible for health and safety.
2. Identify staff in your institution responsible for health and safety (if different from SU). They may be able to support you with your work.
3. Although not essential, you could request basic risk assessment or health & safety training from your manager. Not only will this improve your knowledge and understanding but you may also feel more confident dealing with more complicated situation.
4. Define how you are going to manage risks within your area of work. Do you need to develop new procedures? Can you adapt an existing procedure?
5. Test your procedure by thinking up situations and consider how you would deal with each situation. Here are some ideas:
 - A student group approach you saying they would like to abseil down one of the halls of residence building.
 - The Social Secretary of a society reports that a society member tripped and fell whilst walking between venues at their social last night.

- The photography society has been granted funding by the institution for a dark room on campus, and they will be responsible for buying the developing chemicals.

Thinking about how you would manage these situations will help you to identify areas for developing your policy and procedures.

6. Train colleagues and student leaders so that they feel confident using your procedures.

Glossary

There are a number of acronyms and technical terms when working with health and safety.

We've identified some that you may use, here:

- [COSSH](#) – Control of Substances Hazardous to Health
- Hazard – anything that may cause harm
- Risk – the chance that somebody could be harmed by the hazard with an indication of how serious the harm may be
- [RA](#) – Risk Assessment(s)
- [RIDDOR](#) – Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations

Additional information

The Health and Safety Executive [website](#) contains lots of guidance and references to relevant laws.

The Health & Safety Executive advice on [running safe events](#) is particularly useful for workers in Student Opportunities.

Endsleigh have produced a [guide to managing risk](#). You can also contact them (or your students' union insurer) for more bespoke advice on liability and managing risk.

If you have any questions about this guide or would like to suggest any amendments please contact rosie.hunnam@nus.org.uk.

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