

## POLICY ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

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## **1. Purpose**

The purpose of the Policy on Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) of the University of Pretoria (UP; the University) is to ensure that all stakeholders create and sustain a healthy, safe, risk-free environment for all persons on all UP premises.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all faculties and academic departments, all professional service divisions and sections, as well as permanent and contract employees, students, contractors, and visitors to all UP premises.

## **3. Consequences of non-compliance**

Non-compliance with the OHS Act may result in two categories of consequences. The first pertains to legal penalties as set out in the OHS Act and the second speaks to reputational risks to the Institution.

### **3.1 Legal Penalties**

The penalties that the Department of Labour (DOL) could impose upon employers (i.e UP) may range from simple warnings with conditions of rectification attached, to the closure of premises, a fine or imprisonment. The Act states as follows:

#### *Section 38: Offences, Penalties & Special orders of the Court*

*Any person who contravenes or fails to comply with the stated Section in the OHS Act under 38,1(a-p), shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding R50 000 or to imprisonment for an period not exceeding one year or to both such fine and imprisonment.*

### **3.2 Reputational risks**

The reputation of a business has an important impact on the decision-making of a potential employee and/or client. In the case of UP, this refers, amongst others, to prospective staff and students. When an institution is thrust into the public eye for failing to comply with regulations, there are reputational repercussions, which eventually lead to distrust. A good reputation benefits UP because it, amongst others:

- distinguishes it from its competitors;
- assists in attracting students and staff;
- helps keep the University product (which is its students) rated highly; and
- creates opportunities for growth.

One incident of non-compliance could have a major impact on the University's reputation, which may take many years to rectify.

#### **4. Policy statement**

The University of Pretoria is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all staff, students, mandatories (agents, contractors or subcontractors) and visitors to all its premises, primarily as provided for in the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (OHS Act) and its Regulations.<sup>1</sup>

The statement is attached as [Annexure A](#).

##### **4.1 Duty**

Managers and heads of departments (HODs) have a duty to provide and maintain, as far as reasonably practicable, a work environment that is safe and does not pose any health risk.

The University of Pretoria strives to implement the following principles as far as reasonably practicable:

- **Healthy, safe environment:** Provide and maintain a healthy, safe and risk-free environment at the University.
- **Facilities and resources:** Provide facilities and adequate resources to support the University in complying with the OHS Act and relevant Regulations.
- **Risk management:** Manage, identify and control risks in respect of work procedures, practices, and conditions in the work environment.
- **Safety protocols:** Develop safety protocols to maintain systems related to the use, handling, storage, transport and disposal of hazardous substances.
- **Safe work procedures:** Ensure that all members of the University community enjoy safe work procedures and adhere to OHS standards.
- **Promotion of OHS:** Encourage University staff to serve as positive role models for students and to promote OHS standards in teaching, learning, research and technical support.
- **Monitor and review:** Monitor the effectiveness of the University's OHS provisions in consultation with University management and designated OHS representatives to ensure continued improvement in respect of eliminating work-related injuries and illness.

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<sup>1</sup> Other relevant legislation and national standards are listed under point 6.

- Legal compliance: Ensure that the Policy on Occupational Health and Safety is kept up to date with changes in legislation and national standards.

## **4.2 Responsibilities**

The UP community has to comply with all health and safety practices, including preventing accidents and ensuring occupational well-being. This is a collective and individual responsibility.

## **4.3 Commitment**

The Executive Management of the University is committed to:

- Providing and maintaining, as far as reasonably practicable, a safe work environment that does not pose any health hazard and to recommend mitigation measures in case of an incident.
- Making legal appointments as stipulated in certain sections of the OHS Act and the relevant Regulations.
- Ensuring that baseline hazard identification and risk assessments are done and implementing the necessary risk controls in the workplace.
- Establishing a culture sensitive to OHS among all persons on UP premises.
- Encouraging all persons on UP premises to take ownership of their environment thereby supporting the University's commitment and strategic objectives to create a risk-free environment.
- Generating and implementing policies and procedures that support and enforce the OHS Act and the relevant Regulations, as well as relevant legislation and national safety standards listed under point 6.

UP undertakes to provide a legal framework for the implementation of this policy. The framework contains the following specific objectives:

### Supervision

- To appoint members of management to oversee the implementation process.

### Legal and statutory requirements

- To assign to such appointed individuals roles and responsibilities required to ensure compliance with all stipulations of the OHS Act and its Regulations.
- To establish OHS committees as stipulated in the OHS Act.
- To appoint safety representatives in all divisions to serve on and contribute to the said committees.

### Unhealthy and unsafe actions and work procedures

- To identify all hazards and risks attached to all work and research activities.

- To generate and implement relevant policies and procedures to mitigate hazards and maintain a risk-free environment.

#### Safety

- To identify acceptable control measures in consultation with expert stakeholders and with reference to accredited quality standards and recommendations.
- To provide the resources necessary to implement control mechanisms for risk management.
- To ensure that risk control measures are implemented openly and transparently.
- To constantly monitor, record and report all incidents and risk mitigation control measures.

#### Employee awareness

- To provide appropriate training and safety awareness programmes in order to cultivate a culture of safety among all persons on UP premises.

### **4.4 Compliance**

Implementation of the abovementioned aspects, will establish a near risk-free environment and ensure, as far reasonably practicable, compliance with the requirements of the OHS Act and its Regulations.

### **5. Definitions**

All definitions contained in the OHS policy are as stipulated in Section 1 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (No 85 of 1993).

### **6. Roles and responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities with regard to OHS are as stipulated in Sections 8 to 20 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (No 85 of 1993).

The Vice Chancellor and Principal shall assign, in terms of subsection 16(2) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the duties as contemplated in subsection 16(1) of the said Act to the Executive Managers. All Executive Managers have the statutory responsibility and accountability for health and safety within their working environment.

The VC will also appoint the following:

- The Chairperson for the Central Health and Safety committee
- The GMR 2.1 appointee

The Executive Managers must appoint:

- The Deans and Directors as section 8 appointees
- Other officials in high-risk areas, including but not limited to, the Director of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital, the Manager of INNOVATIONAFRICA@UP and the Heads of Residences, as section 8 appointees
- Chairpersons for each Health and Safety committee in the Faculties and Departments
- Health and Safety representatives in each Faculty/ Department
- First Aiders as required
- Incident investigators

Each employee needs to take ownership for his/her own Health and Safety as well that of his/ her colleagues, students and visitors.

A comprehensive Occupational Health and Safety procedure has been developed for the University and should be read in conjunction with the OHS policy. It is available on the UP portal under Policies as an associated document to the OHS Policy.

## **7. Associated documents**

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993.
- Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 as amended.
- Hazardous Substances Act 15 of 1973.
- Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 as amended.
- Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 as amended.
- Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act 130 of 1993.
- National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998.
- National Building and Standards Act 103 of 1977 as amended.
- National Standards Act 8 of 2008.
- National Health Act 61 of 2003.
- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 section 24.
- SANS 10400. The National Building Regulations.
- SANS 10142-1: 2017. Edition 2. The Wiring of Premises.
- ISO 14000:2015. Environmental Management System.
- ISO 18001:2007. International Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems.

## 8. Policy life cycle

This policy will be reviewed at least every five years.

## 9. Document metadata

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## **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

The University is committed to protecting its employees, students, visitors and property at all times by implementing an effective occupational health and safety programme in accordance with the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 and its Regulations.

Specific elements are important in the implementation of the policy. These are listed below.

### **1. ASPECTS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The University, in its capacity as employer, shall design and implement practicable health and safety standards.

### **2. INSTRUCTION IN HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Instruction in all aspects of health and safety shall form part of employees' on-the-job training, students' academic programmes, induction of visitors and managing of contractors.

### **3. RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Every employee, student, visitor and contractor are responsible for implementing the Occupational Health and Safety Policy, so as to safeguard all employees, students, visitors, contractors and property of the University.

### **4. AWARENESS AMONG EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS**

Employees' and students' interest and involvement in their own health and safety, and the health and safety of others, shall be promoted by means of awareness programmes.

### **5. UNHEALTHY AND UNSAFE ACTIONS AND WORK PROCEDURES**

The University, its employees, students, visitors, and contractors are committed to eliminating actions and work procedures that are unhealthy and unsafe.

### **6. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

The University shall implement all requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 and its Regulations. A healthy, safe work and academic environment can only be achieved if management, employees, students, visitors and contractors are committed to compliance with the statutory requirements.



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