

OBJECTIVE

To provide information and guidance to RMIT staff on Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committees (HSCs).

BACKGROUND

SCOPE

This process applies to all RMIT staff.

Note that this process will be applicable in Victoria, Australia only; however, it does not restrict other campuses adopting a similar process.

WHAT MUST GO RIGHT?

The expected outcomes – known as ‘what must go right’ – will be that:

- Health and Safety Committees (HSCs) are established and meet at least every 3 months
- Staff have an effective forum to raise and address unresolved HSW issues.

PROCEDURE

1. RMIT Health and Safety Committees (HSCs)

The HSCs are to reflect a consultative approach to HSW Management. HSCs should include all people and areas of RMIT contributing to ensure safe systems of work.

HSCs will deal with local and University-wide HSW issues and process. Increasing HSW awareness within RMIT is a priority for these committees. Where practicable, day-to-day issues shall be addressed immediately through line management or at regular staff meetings and not at HSCs.

The **OHS Act** requires HSRs and employer representatives to attempt to resolve HSW issues and disputes in accordance with RMIT’s agreed issue resolution process (**HR - HSW-PR07-FC01 - HSW Issue Resolution Flowchart** and **HR - HSW-PR07-WI01 - HSW Issue Resolution**)

HSCs are required to meet at least every 3 months, as legislated.

Establishment of HSC

RMIT encourages the formation local Health and Safety Committees. HSCs are to be formed in accordance with **the OHS Act** and upon the request of an elected HSR. A HSC must be established within three months of the request.

Committees are formed to facilitate safe systems of work. They are a mechanism for:

- Planned and structured consultation,
- Broad consultation addressing matters affecting more than one DWG,
- The formulation and review of School/ business unit health, safety and wellbeing processes,
- The sharing and dissemination of health, safety and wellbeing knowledge, and
- Informing staff and raising awareness of HSW matters.

A register of all HSCs formed under this process will be maintained by RMIT's HSW Team. The **HR - HSW-PR08-RG01 Register of HSRs, DHSRs and HSCs** will also contain details of all HSRs and DHSRs.

Who should be on a HSC?

At least half the membership of an HSC must be staff (that is HSRs or deputy HSRs (DHSRs)) of RMIT.

Senior Leaders must, so far as is reasonably practicable, consult with staff when determining the membership of any HSC.

RMIT representatives on the HSC should be persons involved at senior leadership levels in the organisation who are able to make decisions about health, safety and wellbeing matters.

RMIT representatives should be drawn from senior leaders, operational leaders, technical experts and personnel officers. This ensures that the HSC is provided with the necessary knowledge and expertise regarding matters including, for example, enterprise/HSW policy, financial authority and technical matters concerning premises, processes, plant (including machinery and equipment) and systems of work. RMIT representatives should include someone who can either authorise budgets or expenditures.

Where specialist health and safety personnel are not members of the committee, the HSC may consider inviting them in an advisory capacity. In other words, the RMIT representation on the committee should be such that the committee has all the information, experience and skills it needs to deal with health, safety and wellbeing issues in the work and study environment.

Committee Function and Activities

The HSCs shall develop a Charter or Terms of Reference to encourage staff to adopt a positive, proactive approach towards HSW and continuous improvement. The **HR - HSW-PR50-TM03 - HSC Charter Template** has been developed to assist.

The functions of the HSCs are to:

- Represent staff by means of open and honest communication with regular feedback
- Facilitate a people orientated approach and concern for the welfare of the individual
- Promote HSW within the workplace and to lead by example
- Promote compliance with RMIT's Global Safety Model in addition to Standards and statutory obligations
- To adopt an innovative approach to management of HSW and strive for continuous improvement of RMIT's safety performance
- To identify potential issues and implement corrective actions
- To address long term, broad issues as well as resolving day to day ones that have been directed to the committee as per **HSW-PR07-WI01 – HSW Issue Resolution** process.

Specifically, the activities of a HSC shall include:

- Identifying major HSW issues or deficiencies in HSW processes, their implementation or awareness
- Prioritising issues to be addressed
- Determining and implementing ways of increasing personal HSW awareness
- Assisting in site inspections, audits, investigations into injuries, incidents and the recommended actions
- Providing a forum for open discussion on matters and promote cooperation within RMIT and Designated Work Group (DWG)
- Discussing concerns which have not been resolved between staff and management as per **HR - HSW-PR07-WI01 – HSW Issue Resolution** and make recommendations for consideration
- Networking with committees within RMIT and benchmark HSW performance

- If considered appropriate, invite guest speakers to address the committee in order to focus, encourage and generate ideas
- Establishing systems for the recognition of individuals who have made important contributions to improving health, safety and wellness.
- Participating in internal and external HSW audits where required
- Reviewing and monitoring the following where appropriate:
 - > Specific College / School or Portfolio issues and priorities
 - > RMIT processes (updated as required)
 - > Key site modifications and hazard studies
 - > Safe systems of work

Information to be provided to the Committees

Management HSW Representatives shall ensure all relevant HSW information is made available to the HSC members. This includes inspection and audit reports, statistics, investigation reports, changes in legislation, training records, new processes or any other documents as appropriate.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Management Plan

The HSC is to develop a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Management Plan (the Plan) for the calendar year. The plan is to record specific HSW objectives for the HSC, including:

- Specific targets for each objective
- Actions required to meet targets/objectives
- The name of the Lead for targets / objectives
- Date to meet targets / objectives
- Progress of action items

The HSC can utilise **HR – HSW-PR50-TM01 - Health, Safety and Wellbeing Management Plan Template** to develop and record the details of the Plan.

Responsibilities of Committee Members

HSC Members are expected to work closely and pro-actively together to resolve day-to-day issues, which may be raised by staff, line management or the HSRs/DHSRs themselves. Where resolution of an issue is not resolved locally, the issue is to be escalated to a more senior level.

Minor Safety Matters

Minor, day-to-day matters and problems brought to the attention of any Committee member shall be dealt with on the spot rather than await a Committee meeting. Assistance can be sought from the HSW Team. Such matters shall only be raised at a committee meeting if management has been unable to act on these matters in an appropriate time frame.

Meetings

HSCs should initially meet at least monthly until they become more established. Committees can set the frequency of meetings. However, HSCs must meet at least once every three months, as required under the **OHS Act**.

- An agenda for each meeting is to be issued by the Secretary (following consultation with the Chairperson). Any Committee member may place items on the agenda by notifying the Secretary. HSCs may utilise **HR - HSW-PR50-TM02 – HSC Agenda Template**.

- Quorum as stipulated in the Committee Terms of Reference or Charter shall be met at each meeting.
- Minutes will be taken for each meeting, including attendance, issues discussed, decisions and actions. All actions shall be nominated to an individual at the workplace and the required action date is to be stated.
- A member shall be nominated to ensure action occurs.
- Minutes will be issued to all Committee Members and persons responsible for completing actions and is to be communicated to members of the applicable DWG. Communication may be digital and may utilise **HR - HSW-PR50-TM04 – HSC Minutes Template.0**
- Records of all agendas, minutes and any other documents relevant to the operation of the Committee shall be kept by the Secretary for a period complying with **HR – HSW-PR04 – HSW Records Management**. These records shall be made available to any committee member upon request.

Time availability

Leaders shall ensure that HSC Representatives have enough time to devote to matters related to the HSC's activities. Further information on HSR Time Allocation is detailed in **HR – HSW-PR08 – Health and Safety Representatives**.

Alternatives to Forming a Health and Safety Committee

Where a School / business unit decides through consultation with staff, and with the agreement of the HSR, if there is one, that they do not wish to form a committee, they must establish an alternative method of consultation.

Alternative methods of consultation must:

- Achieve the functions outlined for a health and safety committee,
- Be agreed by the HSR/DHSR, and
- Be documented in a consultation plan.

Reasons for not forming a HSC might be:

- The size and number of the DWG would make it impractical,
- Remote locations making meeting difficult,
- Consultation with staff and agreement of the HSRs/DHSRs identify alternatives which are preferable, or current arrangements are working well,
- Health and safety consultative mechanisms are already well integrated into operational practices, and
- A HSC already exists.

2. Records

All records relating to HSRs, DWGs and HSCs are to be maintained as detailed in **HR - HSW-PR04 - HSW Records Management**.

3. Responsibilities

Senior Leaders

- Supporting the role of the HSC by way of allocating the required resources.
- Ensure their active participation in HSC meetings, as RMIT's representative and to make decisions regarding any HSW recommendations formulated by the Committee and put forward for consideration by RMIT.
- Providing guidance to HSRs and staff representatives
- Ensuring the release from the work and learning environment of HSRs / DHSRs and staff representatives to attend Committee duties.
- In writing, notify affected staff of any changes to their DWG's

Health and Safety Committee Members

- Ensure all staff are responsible for applying HSW considerations to daily tasks performed in the workplace
- Responsible for detecting hazards in their operational area of control and within their level of authority and taking prompt remedial action
- Responsible for their personal safety, safety of fellow staff, students, third parties, volunteers, visitors and all property & equipment used in the workplace.

Health Safety & Wellbeing Team

- Responsible for maintaining **HR - HSW-PR08-RG01 - Register of HSRs & HSCs** after being notified of election results.
- Provide HSRs/DHSRs and HSCs with HSW advice and assistance when required

4. Definitions

Defines any key terms and acronyms relating to the process where they apply.

Term / acronym	Definition
Area	College / School or Portfolio
DHSR	Deputy Health and Safety Representative
DWG	Designated Work Group
HSC	Health and Safety Committee
HSR	Health and Safety Representative
HSW	Health, Safety and Wellbeing
The OHS Act	Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Senior Leader	This includes leaders within schools and department, and includes senior school managers, heads, deans and their deputies, program director, assistant directors, discipline heads, senior managers, professors and associate professors.

5. Supporting Documents

- HR - HSW-PR08 – Health and Safety Representatives
- HR - HSW-PR08-RG01 - Register of HSRs & HSCs
- HR – HSW-PR51 – Designated Work Groups
- HR - HSW-PR07 - Consultation & Communication
- HR - HSW-PR07-WI01 - HSW Issue Resolution
- HR - HSW-PR07-FC01 - HSW Issue Resolution Flowchart
- HR - HSW-PR04 - HSW Records Management.
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (VIC)