REPORT ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AT THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

1. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

*Health, safety and environmental policy and action steps in compliance with the instructions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993*

**Policy Statement**

The health and safety of all who are exposed to the activities of the University, regardless of whether it is in the workplace or on the terrain, are of primary importance to management. In cooperation with the employees the University will do everything as far as reasonable practicable to prevent accidents, injuries, occupational illness or the release of material which may be hazardous to the environment and employees.

Management accepts its responsibility to inform those who may be exposed to potential hazards and to develop appropriate operational standards as part of an effective prevention programme.

Achievements reached in safeguarding the workplace and the environment against potential hazards resulting from activities of the University are regarded as highly as any other achievements. The University’s achievements in the area of safety, occupational health and the environment are a result of its quality improvement process.

Sub-section 8(2)(g) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act obliges every person that are present on the premises of an employer, to adhere to the health and safety measures of that employer, therefore all students, visitors and all other persons present on the premises on the University, are hereby included in the provisions of this policy.

**1.1 Action steps**

All managerial heads/ departmental heads/ divisional heads/ supervisors are responsible and accountable for providing a safe working environment for the employees and students under their control. In this they will;

- Identify potential dangers;

- Use well-designed processes, equipment and procedures, supported by the necessary information, instructions, training and management systems, to control and to limit any potentially hazardous condition or risk to the minimum, to ensure the health and safety at work of employees, students and visitors as far as is reasonably possible;

- To point out any potential dangers to the relevant persons;
- Provide such protective equipment, to be used for the purpose and activity it is issued for, as is necessary for the health and safety at work for employees and students;
- Ensure the provision of health and safety standards in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and hazardous substances;
- Supervise that the necessary measures and standards, in the importance of health and safety, is adhered to.
- Monitor the effectiveness of health and safety provisions within the workplace.

1.1.1 General responsibilities of supervisors (in terms of section 8 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 85 of 1993)

It is important to understand that the duties of an employer automatically become the duties of the relevant head of departments and managers. Due to this, a supervisor has the authority to ensure that health and safety measures in his/her area of responsibility are adhered to.

Supervisors are expected to perform the following actions:

**Step 1:** To, as far as is reasonably practicable, identify the potential hazards which may exist regarding the health or safety of persons that are attached to any work which is performed, any article or substance which is produced, processed, used, handled, stored or transported and regarding any operational equipment or machinery which is used (Section 8(2)(d)).

**Step 2:** To further establish what precautionary measures should be taken as far as is reasonable practicable with respect to such work, article, substance, operational equipment or machinery in order to protect the health and safety of persons, and to provide the necessary means to apply such precautionary measures (Section 8(2)(d)).

**Step 3:** Provide the necessary information, instruction, training and supervision, taking into account the ability of the employee to perform his/her duties.

**Step 4:** To ensure, as far as it is reasonably possible, that each employee is aware of the hazards regarding his health and safety with regard to any work he must perform, any article or substance he must produce, process, use, handle, store or transport and any operational equipment or machines which he is expected or allowed to use, as well as with regard to the preventative measures which must be made and met regarding those hazards (Section 8(2)(f)).

**Step 5:** To enforce such measures as may be necessary in the interest of health and safety (Section 8(2)(h)).

1.1.2 General responsibilities of employees (in terms of section 14 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 85 of 1993)

Employees shall be trained to comply with health and safety standards in the workplace and it is expected of every employee to carry out their work in a safe manner in order to prevent injury and ill health either to themselves or to others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work or study.

Section 14 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act impose a duty on employees to adhere to the measures of national legislation and regulations, which includes adhering to prescribed health
and safety measures, taking reasonable care of ones’ own and others’ health and safety, etc. This duty also includes adhering to legitimate instructions in order to promote health and safety. These instructions should comply with the requirements of reasonableness, fairness and constitutionality.

Employees are expected to perform the following actions:

**Step 1:** To comply with the health and safety rules and procedures prescribed by his/her supervisor or someone authorised by the employer to give those instructions in the interest of health and safety (Section 14(1)(c)).

**Step 2:** In the event that a hazardous, potentially hazardous or unhealthy condition comes to his/her attention, to report it as soon as possible to the supervisor or the health and safety representative of his workplace or division (depending on the situation), who must report it to the employer (Art 14(1)(d)).

**Step 3:** In the event that an employee was involved in an incident which may affect his health or which resulted in an injury to himself, or may affect the health and safety of co-workers, to report that incident to his supervisor or someone authorised for that purpose by the employer, or to his health and safety representative as soon as possible but no later than the end of the particular shift in which the incident took place, unless circumstances are of such a nature that the immediate reporting of the incident is not possible, in which event he must report the incident as soon as possible afterwards (Section 14(1)(e)).

**Step 4:** In general to take reasonable responsibility for his own safety and health and those of other persons which may be affected by his actions or neglect (Section 14(1)(a)).

**1.2 Contractor control**

Contractors doing contract work for the university shall comply with relevant health and safety legislation and provide proof there off to the university.

The university will supply the contractor with a documented health and safety specification and this will form part of the agreement (contract) between the university and the contractor.

A contractor shall provide and demonstrate to the university a suitable and sufficiently documented health and safety plan, based on the university’s documented health and safety specifications, for approval. If approved, this safety plan will be applicable from the date of commencement of and for the duration of the contract work.

Every contractor performing contract work shall before the commencement of any contract work and during the contract work, cause a risk assessment to be performed by a competent person appointed in writing and the risk assessment shall form part of the health and safety plan to be applied on the site and shall include at least—

(a) the identification of the risks and hazards to which persons may be exposed to;

(b) the analysis and evaluation of the risks and hazards identified;

(c) a documented plan of safe work procedures to mitigate, reduce or control the risks and hazards that have been identified;

(d) a monitoring plan;

Every contractor performing construction work shall comply with the construction regulations as contemplated in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 85 of 1993.

Every contractor shall ensure that a health and safety file, which shall include all documentation required in terms of the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and relevant Regulations, is opened and kept on site and made available to an inspector, the university, university’s agent or contract manager.
1.3 Reporting of incidents and injury on duty

The Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (130 of 1993) determines that written or verbal notice of an accident shall, as soon as possible after such accident happened, be given by or on behalf of the employee concerned to the employer. An employee who has met with an accident shall, when reporting the accident or thereafter at the request of the employer or commissioner, furnish such information and documents as may be prescribed or as the employer or commissioner may direct.

In addition the Act determines that neglect to report an injury or alleged injury is a criminal offence. The Commissioner may also fine the employer for the full amount of the claim.

All accidents/incidents concerning health and safety at the workplace must be reported to the safety representative, the employee’s supervisor and at the allocated reporting point on campus. All accidents/incidents in the workplace will be investigated by ‘n investigator appointed by the university.

2. INSTITUTIONAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STRUCTURE

2.1 ROLE PLAYERS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ON CAMPUSES

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is co-ordinated on an institutional level, but managed on every campus. The main role players in the management process on the different campuses are the Chief Director: Finance and Facilities of each
2.2 APPOINTMENT PROCESS

1.2.1) The Vice-chancellor (CEO) appoints the following persons in writing:

i) The chair of the Institutional OHS Committee,

ii) The three campus rectors and

iii) The Chief Director Finances and Facilities of each campus

(These are all 16.2 appointments, OHS Act)

2.2.2) The Campus Rector of the Potchefstroom Campus appoints the Chairs of the Faculty/Departmental OHS-committees in writing. This only applies to the Potchefstroom campus because there is more than one OHS Committee.

The Executive OHS-Committee on the Potchefstroom campus co-ordinate and monitor OHS on the campus, i.e. that the other OHS Committees on this campus will report to this committee.

2.2.3) The chair of each OHS-Committee is responsible to appoint health and safety representatives in the workplace and committee members in writing. Safety representative appointments are in place on the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle Campuses.

2.2.4) The members of the Institutional OHS Committee are appointed in writing by the Institutional Director Finances and Facilities.

2.3 CURRENT STATUS OF OHS-SYSTEM

The Institutional Director Finance and Facilities, the three campus Rectors and the Chief Director: Finance and Facilities of the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses are appointed in writing by the Vice-Chancellor. The health and safety representative appointments on the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses are in place and the different OHS-committees on these campuses are functioning according to legislation.

The new Chief Director: Finance and Facilities on the Mafikeng campus as well as the health and safety representatives still have to be appointed in writing. The OHS-committee on the Mafikeng campus can start with its functions as soon as the appointments have been done. The appointment process on the Mafikeng campus was unsuccessful thus far mostly because a) there was not the necessary support from the departments when we tried to appoint Health and Safety representatives and b) for the last 18 months there were four different Chief Directors Finance and facilities appointed. The OHS-program on the Mafikeng campus can be implemented as soon as the OHS-committee is operational.

2.4 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING

It is important that every person involved in the OHS-Structure of the University, receive relevant training to empower them to promote OHS in the workplace. Health and safety training was presented to representatives on the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle campuses.

Training needs still to be addressed are health and safety training for representatives on the Mafikeng campus as well as first-aid training for employees on the Mafikeng campus. Health and safety training is an ongoing process and training needs have to be assessed every year on the three different campuses.
Yours sincerely

Phillip van Heerden
Institutional Safety Co-ordinator