



National Open University of Nigeria

Policy Title	NOUN Health and Safety Policy
Policy No:	NQSA/POL/IGM/012
Owner:	National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)
Approved By:	The University Senate
Manager/Driver:	Faculty of Health Science
Date of Approval:	7 th October, 2024
Date of Next Review:	October 2027

1.0 Introduction

This policy sets out the general approach of the National Open University of Nigeria to health and safety issues. The policy was developed in alignment with the National Policy on Occupational Health and Safety, the Fire Service Act Cap F29 Law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and what is obtainable in other universities, considering international best practices.

The policy clearly spelt out responsibilities of the University Management, staff and students and visitor towards ensuring safety for all in the university and all its Study Centres and wherever it operates.

2.0 Health and Safety Policy

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to state clearly how National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) implements its legal and moral obligations relating to the health and safety of its staff, students and any other person who may be affected by its undertakings in the headquarters of the university, study centres and any other place the university is conducting any of its activities.

2.2 Aims

The university is committed to meeting its statutory and moral health and safety responsibilities and to creating a culture that is both proactive and collaborative in supporting the health and safety of all its stakeholders.

The principal aims of this policy are to:

- i. Reduce the risk to people and property to enable NOUN to operate effectively.
- ii. Manage the university's work environment in such a way as to allow staff, students, contractors, visitors and others who might be affected by its undertakings in the Headquarters, Study Centres and any other locations where it is carrying out its activities.
- iii. Ensure that all members carry out their duties without any detriment to their health and safety whilst imbibing health and safety as core in the university.
- iv. Ensure that the university has governance arrangements in place that enables it to demonstrate compliance with health and safety laws and regulations of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; and the development of a health and safety management framework.

2.3 Objectives

To achieve the aims stated above, the university has the following objectives:

- i. to assess risk and hazard associated with activities carried out by staff, students, contractors and others;
- ii. to ensure minimization of risk to health through the provision and maintenance of suitable plant, buildings, facilities, equipment and the provision of safe systems of work;
- iii. to minimise unavoidable risks by putting in place risk management mechanism and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary;
- iv. to provide safe arrangements for the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances that are considered hazardous or dangerous;
- v. to provide necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure the health and safety of staff, students and others where ever the university is operating or carrying out any activity;
- vi. to consult with employees' representatives on health and safety matters;
- vii. to implement a monitoring, inspection and audit process to ensure effective management of health and safety throughout the university;
- viii. to co-ordinate, co-operate and exchange relevant information with organisations providing support and facilities to the university employees and students with regards to health and safety;

- ix. to co-ordinate, co-operate and exchange relevant information with contractors and visitors in such a way that their health and safety will be guaranteed;
- x. to integrate health and safety responsibilities into everyday working practices and managerial responsibilities; and
- xi. To achieve every other objective stated in the National Health and Safety Policy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as contained in sections 3.0 to 3.3
- xii. The overall objective is to ensure that the ***right action is taken, by the most appropriate person(s) and at the right time to ensure health and safety of employees, students and visitors to the National Open University of Nigeria.***

2.4 Scope

The scope of this policy applies to all staff, students, contractors and visitors and is intended for implementation in all the university constituent academic and administrative departments, units, faculties and directorates.

This document forms part of the University's Health and Safety Management System by:

- i. defining the health and safety roles and responsibilities of key individuals and groups;
- ii. outlining the governance arrangements in place and how statutory consultation on health and safety matters is undertaken;
- iii. providing that failure to comply with the University's health and safety requirements may lead both to disciplinary action by the university and potential legal action

particularly if the noncompliance is substantial that it causes harm to others;

This policy will be reviewed at intervals of not more than every 2 years or as the Senate of the University may deem fit as recommended by University Health and Safety Committee.

2.5 Definition

Members include staff, students, facilitators, contractors, visitors, etc.

3.0 Health Policy Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Policy Organisation

The Governing Council of the University should adopt this Health and Safety Policy to implement the policy statement above and to ensure effective management of health and safety issues.

3.2 Duty of Care

- a. To meet our duty of ensuring health and safety of all staff, students, contractors, visitors and those affected by our undertakings there is a cascade of delegated accountability that runs through the university from the Vice-Chancellor to each individual primarily via the line management framework.
- b. Responsibilities are allocated based on the principle that individuals are responsible for the work under their control, for those working under their control and for the people who are affected by their work. This is accompanied by a system of monitoring, supervision and feedback that ensures that delegated tasks have been adequately implemented and

that arrangements are in place to facilitate and support individuals in meeting their responsibilities.

- c. These arrangements and the effective management and control of risks to health and safety require that all parties with an influence on how the university operates must meet their duty of care to those who may be affected by their acts and omissions. The level of assurance required should commensurate with the risk of the activity.
- d. It should be noted that the Study Centres of the University have the responsibility of ensuring proper implementation of this policy in their respective centres.

3.3 General Responsibilities

This policy sets out general, overarching responsibilities. Other subject specific health and safety policies and arrangements give details of more specific actions employees, Deans, Directors, Heads of Department and students as well as others need to take to meet their responsibilities.

3.3.1 Employees

- a. Every employee of the university has a responsibility to ensure their own health and safety, and to ensure others are not put at risk by their acts or omissions at work. In whatever they do, they should consider safety first.
- b. Likewise, every employee is empowered to stop their work, or the work of others should they feel the work is being carried out in an unsafe environment or manner that may cause health or safety concern in accordance with the National Policy on Health and Safety.
- c. It is important that all employees should read this policy and sign a policy agreement form on assumption of duty

that he/she understands his role to ensure his safety and safety of others.

3.3.2. Students

- a. All students of the university are not in the legal sense employed persons and hence, the policy requirement of staff does not apply to them.
- b. Equally, they are not bound by the duties of employees as laid down by the regulations of the university to ensure safety. Nevertheless, students must comply with health and safety instructions as specified in this policy and may be responsible for the consequences should they neglect to carry out a task required for the health and safety of others.
- c. Consequently, all students are responsible for:
 - i. Looking after their own health and safety and the safety of others who may be affected by their actions whilst on university premises or undertaking activities (e.g. fieldwork, work or study placements, SIWES, Practicum, mooting) under the supervision of the university and its assigned supervisors or preceptors.
 - ii. following the University's Health and Safety Policy and their Department's safety arrangements and procedures;
 - iii. following any instructions given to them by an employee of the University for their health and safety;
 - iv. reporting health and safety incidents or concerns pertaining to academic or university premises (including accidents, ill-health, premises hazards) in

- accordance with their department and university procedures;
- v. taking part in any health and safety training identified as necessary by the university, their department or their academic supervisor; and
 - vi. ensuring they do not, without the consent of the member of staff in charge of the areas or activity, introduce any equipment for use on university premises, alter any fixed installations, alter or remove health and safety notices or equipment, or otherwise take any action which may create hazards for persons using the premises or employees of the university.

3.4 University Management

- a. Outline of Responsibilities for Principal Officers, Dean, Directors and Head of Departments. Responsibility for health and safety within the university may be simply the core legal duty to cooperate with the University Health and Safety Policy at all levels and is the overall responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor.
- b. However, any university employee acting in a managerial, professional or supervisory position bears additional management responsibilities and the more senior the appointment, the more onerous the responsibility.
- c. The level of that responsibility is directly linked to the level of control since responsibilities are allocated based on the principle that you are responsible for the work under your control, for those working under your control and for the people who are affected by your work. The nature of the

structure of the university is such that some role holders will have more than one set of responsibilities.

- d. With regards to ensuring safety of staff and student working under a particular unit or directorate, the heads of such unit or directorates are responsible for the safety of all working under them and on Health and safety issues, **responsibilities cannot be delegated.**

3.4.1 The Vice-Chancellor

- a. The Vice-Chancellor is the overall Head of Academic and Administration of the University and therefore is the Chief Health and Safety Officer of the University whose role must ensure provision of health and safe working environment for all staff and students and other members of the university.
- b. The Vice-Chancellor must:
 - i. ensure that the university has a policy on the management of health and safety and that this Policy is reviewed on a regular basis and communicated to all staff;
 - ii. ensure that structures, systems and procedures are in place to secure implementation of this policy and associated policies and arrangements;
 - iii. agree on how the policy will be measured, monitored and reported through the development of appropriate key performance indicators and also agree with health and safety objectives.
- c. The Vice-Chancellor also has the authority to take whatever executive action considered necessary to prevent serious harm to individuals or to the university. In exceptional circumstances, this may include summarily

closing down university buildings, sites, operations or activities that he may deem fit for safety reasons and concern.

3.4.2 The management staff of the university shall therefore ensure

- i. Provision of adequate safety equipment in the work place;
- ii. Provision of medical emergency and emergency preparedness plan including identification of muster points within the university and study centres;
- iii. Provide and equip a fire service within the university and link all study centres with the nearest firefighting department in their respective locations;
- iv. Periodic survey of workplace and provision of report on safety level of the work environment;
- v. Training of staff in the area of occupational health and safety.

3.5 Academic Staff including Adjunct, Facilitators and Supervisors

- a. Academic staff, including Principal Investigators and staff with teaching responsibilities are responsible for assessing, taking account of, and addressing the risks including health and safety risks associated with research proposals and teaching activities in line with the university health and safety policies and requirements.
- b. Academic staff, including Principal Investigators and staff with teaching responsibilities must:
 - i. ensure the safe handling and use of hazardous substances and the maintenance of safe plant,

- machinery and equipment under their control in case of Practical and Practicum;
- ii. provide staff with access to health surveillance where identified in risk assessments;
 - iii. ensure co-ordination and communication with co-investigators, research employees and others affected by research and teaching activities to enable health and safety risks to be effectively managed;
 - iv ensure all accidents and incidents are reported and investigated in accordance with agreed university arrangements and procedures;
 - v. take appropriate action when health and safety is likely to be compromised; if necessary, suspending an activity pending reassessment of the risk;
 - vi. ensure that their staff and students comply with any policies or arrangements and procedures produced by the university, in particular, those required for statutory compliance purposes;
 - vii. ensure that there are arrangements in place for ensuring the health and safety of students during undergraduate laboratory sessions.

3.6 Building Occupier

- a. Irrespective of the position or rank of any staff, student or facilitator, it is their primary responsibility to ensure that the space allocated to them is used safely and according to its design and expected use.
- b. Overall responsibility of an occupier will normally sit with the relevant Head of Department; however, this responsibility

can be delegated to the most senior member of staff based in that building/location.

- i. Dean in case of a faculty;
 - ii. Director in case of a directorate or study centre;
 - iii. Head of Department in case of a department;
 - iv. Respective Head of Unit in case of units.
- c. In particular, the occupier is responsible for:
- i. ensuring that they communicate and cooperate with other occupiers/users of the building (including visitors) to ensure that risks to health and safety are effectively managed (this can be achieved through a Building Occupiers Forum or Group);
 - ii. consulting with Physical Planning Unit when requesting changes to layout, structure or services within the building including installation or change of electric appliances, switches and clearing blocked water way;
 - iii. informing Physical Planning Unit or landlord of any building related issues that may impact the health and safety of other occupiers/users or visitors;
 - iv. consulting with Physical Planning Unit when defining responsibility for managing equipment or services where boundaries may be unclear, e.g. whether they are part of the building or viewed as occupier's equipment and ensuring responsibilities are documented;
 - v. organising and managing work, processes and equipment to prevent injury or ill health and ensuring all spaces have fire extinguishers and sand buckets.

3.7 Directorate of Physical Development, Works and Services

- a. The Director of Estates Division is the Landlord for the University Estate and is responsible for health and safety in relation to building structures, fabric and services as well as general areas of buildings which are not the specific responsibility of a department's local Building/Facilities Manager.
- b. As such, the Director, Physical Planning Unit is responsible for the systems and processes that ensure all statutory inspections of systems and equipment notified to the Estates Division are carried out, and for ensuring that the fabric of all university buildings, and fixed installations fitted therein are safe and suitable for use.
- c. In addition, the director shall ensure
 - i. regular inspection of all buildings in the university to ensure their safety.
 - ii. shall produce a safety assessment report to be submitted to the vice chancellor.
 - iii. shall ensure regular maintenance of fire extinguishers in all building of the university.
 - iv. tests and ensure all fire alarms and sprinklers are functional in every building.
 - v. keeps a copy of the emergency preparedness plan of the university

3.8 The Registrar

- a. The Registrar is Head of the Unified Administrative Service, which is responsible for the university's central administrative functions, and which supports the academic

faculties, schools, departments, directorates and Study Centres in fulfilling the university's mission.

- b. On behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, Council and General Board, the Registry, in liaison with those responsible for the operation of the University Safety Office,
 - i. ensures the compliance, implementation and monitoring of the University's safety management system in line with the University Health and Safety Policy;
 - ii. ensures the compliance, implementation and monitoring of other safety policies, arrangements and procedures, local arrangements and legislative requirements;
 - iii. The Registrar is accountable to the Vice-Chancellor for the effective management of Health and Safety within the University's Professional Services.
- c. The Registrar shall:
 - i. provide leadership and governance which supports and strengthens the University's health and safety culture;
 - ii. seek assurance from the appropriate Divisional Heads that health and safety is being managed effectively across their areas of control and that their health and safety responsibilities are being met. This will include assurance relating to:
 - (a) providing leadership and promoting a positive culture
 - (b) ensuring practices comply with local rules and relevant occupational health and safety policies and procedures

- (c) ensuring health and safety related risks are effectively identified and managed o identifying and seeking opportunities to improve the performance of health and safety management systems.

3.9 University Health and Safety Policy Committee

- a. There shall be a University Health and Safety Committee to be constituted by the Vice Chancellor and the committee shall be answerable directly to the Vice chancellor.
- b. The committee is to oversee effective management of health and safety within the University. It receives reports from the University Directorate of Physical Planning and the Fire Service Department and discuss such and transmit same to the University.
- c. The Committee shall also ensure:
 - (i) the necessary management actions are taken to give effect to University Health and Safety Policy
 - (ii) reviews the effectiveness of the University Health and Safety Policy at intervals agreed by the Committee, but not exceeding three years
 - (iii) oversees Safety Office training
 - (iv) Liaise with the National Occupational Safety Committee or any other relevant Committee of the Ministry of Labour.

4.0 University Fire Safety Team aims to:

- i. support and advise the University and Director of Physical Planning, to meet, deliver and maintain statutory fire safety obligations under the Fire Service Act Cap F29 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004;

- ii. support Departmental Fire Safety Managers and Fire Wardens in their roles and provide adequate training to maintain competence and ensure Fire Risk Assessments are carried out for all University premises on an appropriate timescale.
- iii. provide a programme for general staff fire safety awareness training;
- iv. review all fire safety risk assessments as necessary;
- v. provides liaison and support on all matters relating to fire safety provision within the University estate portfolio.
- vi. liaise with the University's insurers with regards to fire safety within University premises (see Appendix 5).
- vii. liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) on all statutory fire safety matters to ensure all fire incidents are investigated.

5.0 Compromise on Health and Safety in the University

Any staff of the University that neglect his duty that led to health and safety issues should be punished in accordance with the Condition of Service of the University in accordance with the strength of his negligence that led to health and safety compromise.

6.0 Risk Management Services

- (a) To detect an impending danger and risks inherent in the work environment.
- (b) To put in place risk management system saddled with prompt response to accident in the work place and provide proactive risk reduction and management system.

7.0 Policy Alignment

The Health and Safety policy of the National Open University of Nigeria shall ensure that all institutional practices (processes, procedures, and systems) are integrated and aligned for the management and assurance of the health and safety of the University Community quality and are in consonance with the vision and mission, strategic objectives, policies, rules and regulations as contained in the following documents:

- i. National Policy on Occupational Health and Safety of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- ii. Fire Service Act Cap F29 Law of the Federal republic of Nigeria 2004
- iii. NOUN Conditions of Service

8.0 Team of Developers

1. Professor Chiedu Mafiana
2. Professor Shehu Usman Adamu
3. Dr Ernest Ugbejeh