WHS Communications and Consultation Procedure

Section 1 - Background

(1) ACU consults with staff, students, visitors, volunteers, contractors and significant stakeholders about the identification and management of WHS risk, and how they contribute to campus safety and the Work Health and Safety Management System (WHSMS or Framework). ACU is committed to maintaining an effective WHSMS that enables informal and formal communications and consultations about WHS risks, policies, procedures and priorities so that the University can maintain high standards of safety for all participants in its community.

(2) ACU's approach to consultations aligns with the ACU Mission, Identity and Values and legal obligation to consult with staff, students, visitors, volunteers and contractors and other stakeholders about matters which are likely to affect their health, safety and wellbeing within its working and learning environments.

Section 2 - Overview of Communications and Consultations

(3) The University utilises a number of informal channels and forums to consult, either locally or more broadly, about its WHSMS, including WHS risk.

Table 1: Informal Channels and Forums for Consultation

Area of Consultation	Informal Channel or Forum	Consultation Responsibilities
Local informal	Staff	• Staff advocate for safety and wellbeing, including the WHSMS, and influence and create awareness about safe systems of work among their colleagues, students and others; • Notify nominated supervisors and managers if they witness unsafe practices; • Are familiar with consultation and engagement processes, including the pathway for Resolving a WHS Issue @ ACU; • Contribute to WHSMS consultations; • Log Riskware reports whenever they are impacted or witness WHS issues or hazards, which cannot be easily resolved; • Participate in early intervention processes if they sustain an injury or work-related illness; and • Engage with their nominated supervisors and others about identifying and resolving issues or hazards and their participation in WHSMS improvement opportunities e.g. completing a Workstation Ergonomics Checklist for their workstation, conducting a Job Safety Analysis (see the Job Safety Analysis Form) and volunteer to conduct WHS inspections.

Area of Consultation	Informal Channel or Forum	Consultation Responsibilities
Local informal	Staff and Nominated Supervisor/Managers	• Provide staff and others with inductions and refreshers that create awareness about the University's consultation arrangements and pathways for Resolving a WHS Issue @ ACU; • Ensure that team meetings include safety and wellbeing agenda items such as discussions about ACU's WHSMS (see Section 4) and their contribution toward the framework and achievement of WHS objectives and targets (see the WHS Action Plan); • Regularly collaborate with staff, students and others whenever hazards are identified and resolved; • Nominate staff to perform WHS roles such as Floor Wardens and COVID marshals at team events; • Engage staff about the need to contribute to WHS Inspections, WHS risk assessments, the development of treatments (controls) and the application of safe systems of work; • Engage staff and others about the contributing factors to incidents and the learnings that have been developed, documented within relevant Riskware Action Plans, to reduce the risk of injury and illness; • Ensure that safety competencies inform position descriptions; • Influence their staff to identify WHSMS development opportunities during performance review and planning discussions; and • Build awareness about the role that everyone plays in contributing to the University's WHSMS.
Members of the Executive / Senior Executive	Staff and Nominated Supervisors / Managers / Members of the Executive	• Advocate for the University's WHSMS and ensure that safety and wellbeing, including the WHSMS, is discussed during team meetings within their organisational unit / portfolio; • Ensure they are informed about the identification and management of significant risk within the work areas they manage and influence; • Approve work arrangements that include WHS considerations such as Work from Home (WFH) Checklists; • Participate in University consultations about their governance obligations as Officers of the University; and • Influence Senior Managers to ensure that they promote the WHSMS and identify and manage significant risk.
Workgroups	Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs)	• Workgroups represent staff within specific organisational units or geographical areas on each campus. • HSRs communicate and consult with their workgroup, WHS Committees and University about the WHSMS, including WHS risk, performance evaluation and issues such as concerns which have been raised by their workgroup.
Campuses	Campus WHS Committees	• Campus WHS Committees (comprised of management, staff, including HSRs and student representatives) consult with the University about measuring, evaluating and reporting on the WHSMS in managing campus WHS risks, including governance and ongoing improvements; • Committee Members also engage with staff and students by conducting WHS inspections and investigations, when required, and resolve issues which their constituents are concerned about; and • Receive regular updates about the effectiveness of the WHSMS, including the aspects of framework performance that are monitored, measured and evaluated, which inform ongoing improvements in risk management practices and the WHSMS.
University-wide	ACU Staff Consultative Committee (ACUSCC)	• Is regularly updated on new and updated WHSMS policies and procedures; and • Receives quarterly reports on the effectiveness of the WHSMS, including the aspects of framework performance that are monitored, measured and evaluated (informing ongoing improvements in risk management practices and the WHSMS).

Area of Consultation	Informal Channel or Forum	Consultation Responsibilities
University-wide	Work Health and Safety Management Committee	• Provides oversight of the WHS Management System and considers feedback from WHS Committees about the effectiveness of the System in managing WHS risk.

Section 3 - Communication and Consultation Triggers

(4) ACU communicates and consults about:

a. hazard identification and risk management processes, including incident investigations, and associated treatments;
b. new or revised WHSMS policies or procedures and their application;
c. the needs and expectations about both internal and external stakeholders such as regulators and clients;
d. proposed changes to the working and learning environment, such as work processes that impact upon roles and responsibilities, and accountabilities;
e. ACU's governance processes and resources such as the WHS Register of Compliance Obligations;
f. compliance obligations of Members of the Executive, staff and others, including the need to identify and manage significant risks;
g. the benefits of improving safety and wellbeing performance;
h. risks associated with non-conformance with the WHSMS;
i. changes in the expectations of the University's external stakeholders;
j. treatments (risk controls) for outsourcing, procuring goods and managing contractors;
k. hazards and associated risks which may impact upon contractors or campus communities and consultation is initiated about treatments (controls); and
l. the aspects of WHSMS performance that should be monitored, measured and evaluated, which inform ongoing improvements in risk management practices and the WHSMS.

(5) Staff and others will also be engaged about ACU mechanisms for consultation and participation, the need to assess and manage significant risks and the specific actions they should take to contribute to WHSMS improvements e.g. complete a Workstation Ergonomics Checklist, action a Job Safety Analysis Form and volunteer to participate in a WHS inspection with a colleague.

(6) The University will also consult about its audit program and opportunities to improve identified non-conformance with the WHSMS, including the associated corrective actions.

Section 4 - Work Area Discussions about the WHSMS

(7) Staff and others are kept informed about a range of topics that support them to contribute to ACU's WHSMS and the achievement of associated objectives and targets. Members of the Executive / Senior Executive and their nominees should ensure that work area meetings include agenda items that contribute to ACU's consultations about its WHSMS.

(8) These and other topics should help inform the selection of safety agenda items for team meetings across the University:

a. the Work, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy, including ACU's commitment to identify and manage the

significant risks which work areas manage and influence;

b. how to locate and access relevant and current WHSMS policies, procedures and tools such as the University's incident and hazard reporting system, Riskware;
c. annual and regular reviews of safety and wellbeing risks and risk registers (uploaded to CARM), and associated treatments (controls);
d. safe systems of work, including emergency and critical incident management processes;
e. how staff and others contribute to the WHSMS, including the WHS Action Plan, and progress towards objectives and targets;
f. expectations of external stakeholders;
g. opportunities for staff to participate in WHSMS improvement opportunities;
h. the outcomes of incident investigations, including contributing factors to the incident, and associated improvements in risk management practices; and
i. requirements for staff to remove themselves from unsafe work situations.

Section 5 - Identifying and Managing Barriers to Communication

(9) Whenever Members of the Executive / Senior Executive, Senior Managers, nominated supervisors and People and Capability staff communicate about safety and wellbeing, including the WHSMS, they should consider and develop strategies to overcome the barriers to effective communication and engagement.

(10) Some of the tactics that should be considered, include:

a. ensuring staff and student website content is highly accessible;
b. communicating in plain English, including minimising the use of WHS terminology and legalese;
c. using multiple channels to create awareness about relevant WHSMS issues;
d. reinforcing critical messages;
e. catering for the diversity of ACU's internal and external target audiences e.g. gender, diverse cultural backgrounds, variations in English proficiency and literacy levels, and disabilities;
f. clearly defining and directly addressing specific audiences, whenever possible;
g. highlighting how safe systems of work are aligned with and complement other University processes that are associated with governance, risk management and service delivery;
h. identifying the benefits to the target audience of contributing to the WHSMS;
i. clearly defining responsibilities and accountabilities; and
j. using imperatives and "calls to action".

(11) These and other barriers should be formally documented and addressed whenever ACU develops its annual WHSMS Communication and Engagement Plan. Work areas should also consider these barriers whenever they are communicating with staff and others.

Section 6 - Annual WHSMS Communication and Engagement Plans

(12) People and Capability WHS staff are responsible for developing an annual WHSMS Communication and Engagement Plan, supported by Marketing and External Relations (Internal Communications) and consultation forums.

The annual plans will be circulated for consultation by the end of Quarter 1.

(13) These plans will be informed by a determination of what needs to be communicated, target audiences, channels to be used, barriers to effective communication and tactics for overcoming these hurdles. The plans will also document strategies for empowering staff and others to make a significant contribution to the WHSMS, and achievement of objectives and targets.

Section 7 - External Communication and Consultation

(14) From time to time, WHS information about ACU's WHSMS is communicated to external parties such as government authorities, health services, legal agencies, and workers' compensation insurers. Whenever these communications are required, Nominated Supervisors and other relevant staff should contact relevant staff, such as People and Capability WHS staff, for support in engaging in these consultations, including any mandatory requirements to notify government authorities.

(15) Whenever ACU collaborates with regulators or other organisations to manage a health and safety issue, relevant University Officers are required to consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with any organisation or authority to ensure that these consultations are effective.

Section 8 - Resolving WHS Issues

(16) Whenever staff members are concerned about a WHS issue they should first consult their Nominated Supervisor. Staff members should also log a report of an incident or hazard within Riskware. A staff member can consult with their Health and Safety Representative (workgroup) or a local Campus WHS Committee Member if they believe their Nominated Supervisor's response did not address all their concerns.

(17) If an issue is not resolved through consultations, staff members should refer to Resolving a WHS Issue @ ACU to progress the issue through the resolution pathway.

Section 9 - Consultative Forums and Representation

Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs)

Area of Consultation

(18) HSRs represent the work health, safety and wellbeing of defined workgroups on campus and are elected by their relevant workgroup. Relevant Nominated Supervisors and managers, including People and Capability WHS staff, should consult HSRs about aspects of the WHSMS that specifically impact upon their workgroup.

(19) Staff members can escalate issues to their HSR whenever they would like a WHS issue addressed that impacts upon their workgroup. This would normally occur where the staff member believes the Nominated Supervisor or manager may not have adequately addressed the WHS risk.

(20) HSRs also normally attend WHS Committee meetings and are asked to review WHS Management System (WHSMS) policies and procedures, from the perspective of the workgroup which they represent.

HSRs Consultation Responsibilities

(21) HSRs escalate WHS issues, which may be raised by a staff member within their workgroup, to a relevant

management representative for their review.

Campus WHS Committees

Area of Consultation

(22) Campus WHS Committees are a forum for Management and Staff and student communication and consultation. These committees consider the effectiveness of the WHSMS on their campus, identify WHS risks and address WHS issues brought to the Committee on behalf of either management, staff members or students.

(23) Staff and students can escalate issues to Campus WHS Committee Members where there is concern about WHS issues that affect their campus community (HSRs should be contacted about workgroup WHS issues).

(24) Campus WHS Committees normally meet quarterly and the minutes of meetings are circulated on local noticeboards and published on the WHS SharePoint site, to inform all staff and students on matters discussed, actioned or resolved by the Committee.

Members Consultation Responsibilities

(25) The Management Representatives, on each Campus WHS Committee, should either resolve, take note of, or escalate concerns to a relevant Executive Member for review. Staff representatives of Campus WHS Committees actively participate in tabling WHS concerns of staff and advising relevant staff of the outcomes from the Committee meeting and or other actions. More information is provided in the WHS Committee Procedure.

ACU Staff Consultative Committee (ACUSCC)

Area of Consultation

(26) The ACUSCC is a peak consultation forum that meets on a quarterly basis to facilitate formal consultation on workplaces issues including WHS. The Committee is composed of management representatives and professional and academic staff, nominated by the unions. Consultation occurs on matters related to the WHSMS, including new or revised policy, procedures, guidelines and programs, prior to their approval. The Committee receives and considers quarterly reports on the effectiveness of the WHSMS and new initiatives and programs.

Members Consultation Responsibilities

(27) Members of ACUSCC provide feedback about any changes to the University's WHSMS, including policies, procedures, guidelines and the management of WHS risk. They are also consulted about performance measurement, evaluation and improvement strategies for the WHSMS (typically addressed within quarter WHS Reports that are distributed to the ACUSCC).

Work Health and Safety Management Committee (WHSMC)

Consultation Focus

(28) The WHSMC is a management forum, composed of members of the Senior Executive and Executive, managers and subject matter experts which ensures that the WHSMS is aligned with University processes and achieves its WHS goals and objectives. The Committee also sets WHS direction, objectives and continuous improvement targets which pertain to the work health, safety and wellbeing of staff, students, visitors, volunteers, contractors and other stakeholders.

(29) The WHSMC ensures that Campus WHS Committees, Health and Safety Representatives, the Institutional Biosafety Committee and other consultative forums support the University to engage staff in two-way consultations

about the WHSMS and improvements.

Members Consultation Responsibilities

(30) The committee members facilitate a cooperative and collaborative approach to monitoring, reviewing and treating WHS risks to support the University to continuously improve its WHSMS. In addition members promote WHS awareness, initiatives and consultation throughout the University. The committee supports and engages with the Chairs of the Campus WHS Committees, reviewing their feedback and issues that have been escalated to the WHS Advisory Committee.

Section 10 - Revisions made to this Procedure

(31) The revision table includes revisions up until this document was migrated into the current policy platform. Any later changes will show in the Status and Details tab.

Date	Major, Minor or Editorial	Description
23 April 2019	Editorial	Update to Appendix 1: Resolving a WHS Issue at ACU updated to include an option for Protected Disclosures and WHS Advisory Committee renamed Work Health and Safety Management Committee.
12 July 2021	Minor	Updated to align with International Standard ISO 45001.

(32) The University may make changes to this Procedure from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation. In this regard, any staff member who wishes to make any comments about this Procedure may forward their suggestions to People and Capability.

Section 11 - Further Assistance

(33) Any staff member who requires assistance in understanding this Procedure should first consult their nominated supervisor who is responsible for the implementation and operation of leave arrangements in their work area. Should further information or advice be required, staff should visit Service Central.

Section 12 - Associated Information

(34) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	22nd February 2024
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Responsible Executive	Angelle Laurence Chief People Officer
Responsible Manager	Angelle Laurence Chief People Officer
Enquiries Contact	Bernardine Lynch ER and Safety Committees and Policy Officer People and Capability