

31. CONFERENCES AND LARGE-SCALE EVENTS

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31.2.1 Aim: To ensure that event organisers make suitable and sufficient provision for the health, safety and welfare of people attending large-scale events such as conferences, trade shows *etc* in University buildings on the Edinburgh bioQuarter campus.

31.3.1 Introduction: Planning for routine events, such as undergraduate lectures *etc* must include prior provision for a properly co-ordinated response to buildings emergencies, such as fire, and is the responsibility of the relevant lecturer. The room booking system for lecture theatres and seminar rooms in the Chancellor’s Building draws attention to this responsibility. There is limited scope to book meeting rooms in the QMRI and CRM buildings, and all requests should be made through the QMRI or CRM Reception, but similar arrangements obtain for emergency arrangements.

31.3.2 The implications for health and safety are correspondingly greater for large-scale and non-routine events, particularly when participants are unfamiliar with the venue, and safety-related instruction is usually necessarily brief.

31.3.3 Risks associated with large-scale events include, but are not limited to:

- Fire (or other building emergency) occurring during the event, while people are present who are unfamiliar with the layout of the building and standing arrangements for building emergencies;
- A medical emergency involving a person attending the event who may feel uncomfortable about drawing attention to their difficulties in a room full of people that they do not know;
- Breach of security involving a person attending the event “tail-gating” a member of staff through a swipe card access controlled doorway and thus gaining access to an area of the building that visitors are not normally permitted to enter;
- Another security-related scenario; and
- An accident involving demonstration of a potentially hazardous procedure to a large number of visitors.

31.3.4 These risks will be addressed in turn in the following paragraphs, but will be very largely mitigated by thorough pre-planning and prior risk assessment, and active supervision during the event.

31.3.5 There is a place also for a post-event debrief so that experiences and lessons learned may be shared and inform the process of improved organisation for future events; and, in all cases, accidents and “near-miss” occurrences must be reported using the procedures outlined in Section 11 of this Manual.

31.4.1 Policy: Event organisers must take account of the health, safety and welfare implications of organising conferences and other large-scale events in either of the two University buildings on the Edinburgh bioQuarter campus, and there must be a clearly identified lead person for all related matters, both before and during each event.

31.5.1 Pre-Event Organisation: An assessment should be made of risk associated with all large-scale events to be held within University of Edinburgh buildings on the Edinburgh bioQuarter site. A risk assessment form may be downloaded from:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/online-resources/risk-assessments>

31.5.2 The following factors should be taken into consideration and addressed by specific arrangements:

- Number of people expected to attend and how these will be accommodated, especially in the context of the normal compliment of people present within the building (*e.g.* catering, toilet facilities, *etc*);
- How unexpectedly large numbers of attendees “on the day” will be managed if the venue is incapable of safely and comfortably accommodating them;
- Hours of attendance by conference delegates and event support staff, particularly if these will extend beyond the normal hours of expected building occupancy (see Section 9 – Out-of-Hours Working – of this Manual for definitions and special arrangements);
- What special arrangements may be necessary to identify and make provision for event attendees who have special needs (*e.g.* mobility, visual and hearing impairments, special dietary requirements, *etc*);
- Car parking arrangements (noting, for example, that a limited number of spaces are available for people with disabilities, and that some car park barriers are only openable for visitors during normal working hours when reception areas are staffed);
- Communications arrangements for event attendees, in a building where mobile telephones may be unreliable (possibly simply to the extent of drawing attention to that fact and leaving delegates to make their own arrangements, but noting that payphones are available only as close as in the Infirmary);
- Importation of special equipment into premises, particularly if bulky or which must be connected to the building’s electricity supply, *etc*;
- Potential security implications; and
- Possible need for dedicated Fire Warden and First Aid cover throughout the period of attendance by a large number of event attendees.

31.5.3 *Prior Information* - Pre-event registration forms might usefully include a request for applicants to inform the event organiser in advance of any special requirements in respect of mobility impairment (as well as special dietary requirements if applicable), and to draw attention to other information that it would be helpful for visitors to the site to be aware of beforehand (location maps, car parking details, access for people with mobility impairment, *etc*); information is available at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/maps>

31.5.4 *Staffing* – Few large-scale events can be organised without assigning some specific support roles for members of staff, including Event Reception, Fire Wardens, and First Aiders. There are also important roles for Chairs of sessions to ensure that clear instructions are given to attendees in the event of a building emergency.

31.5.5 *Signage* – Event organisers should give consideration to the possible need for temporary signage pointing out the location of the Event Reception Desk, toilets, restaurants, break-out rooms, telephones, *etc*. A notice-board, dedicated to the event, may be useful as a means to post notices to individual delegates or for the information of all people passing through the entrance to/exits from the main conference venue.

31.5.6 *Security* – Event organisers should discuss the security implications of the event with buildings security personnel, well in advance of the event. It may, for example, be necessary to assign additional Security Officers to control access and safeguard the venue throughout the duration of the event.

31.5.7 *Catering* – Event organisers should discuss catering requirements well in advance of the event, mindful of the need to avoid conflicting with regular users of the same facilities. Some areas/rooms may be reservable for the exclusive use of event delegates, but this should be discussed beforehand with Buildings Managers.

31.6.1 During the Event: It is usually useful to set up a special Event Reception Desk to relieve pressure on the building's reception staff and to ensure that conference documentation is handed out to all delegates, but also to compile an accurate attendance list and act as a focal point for enquiries by delegates and contact with delegates.

31.6.2 *Fire* – A very early priority for conference organisers must be to brief delegates on steps to be taken in the event of a building emergency. Written information may be provided in delegate packs (see Annex A to this Section), but a concise verbal briefing should also be given prior to the first formal session explaining:

- Alarm signals and expected actions in the event of fire;
- Escape routes from the event venue(s) and location of fire exits;
- Special arrangements for mobility and/or sensory-impaired delegates (also asking them to inform conference organisers so that their special needs can be addressed as required); and
- Whether fire alarms will be tested at any point during the event.

31.6.3 Event organisers may wish to assign responsibility to specific individuals to act as Fire Wardens for a large-scale event. Event Fire Wardens will make periodic

inspections of the venue to ensure that delegates are complying with fire safety measures (no smoking, leaving aisles free of obstacles *etc*) and lead an evacuation of the venue to the relevant Evacuation Assembly Point (see Section 5 of this Manual for further details).

31.6.4 The conference delegates list, which will have been compiled in advance, then refined at registration and subsequently updated on a daily basis throughout the event, should be used by Event Fire Wardens to check-off delegates who have to be evacuated from the building during an emergency. Any unexplained absence should be reported through the Fire Co-ordinator to attending fire-fighters and buildings security staff (see Section 5 of this Manual for further details).

31.6.5 *Medical Emergency* – Event organisers should give consideration to the need for trained First Aiders to station themselves, equipped with appropriate first aid equipment, either within the main event auditorium or at the Event Reception Desk where they can be easily contacted directly by delegates or by anyone else on their behalf.

31.6.6 Trivial injuries will be treated by a First Aider within the limits of their competence, and all designated First Aiders within UofE buildings have been trained in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation techniques. All but the most trivial and most serious emergencies can, though, probably best be managed by transporting the casualty to the Accident & Emergency Department of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. A wheelchair is available at QMRI and CRM Receptions, and patient transport chairs are available just inside the Infirmary adjacent to the connecting corridor with the Chancellor's Building, but all serious injuries should be transported by Ambulance after making a "9-999" call from any extension and posting someone at the entrance doors to meet attending paramedics and lead them to the casualty.

31.6.7 All accidents, injuries and "near-miss" occurrences must be formally reported using the procedures outlined at Section 11 of this Manual.

31.6.8 *Security* – Event organisers should consider the potential for the event to attract the unwelcome attention of demonstrators or even an undesired reaction from an accredited delegate or someone who has falsified their credentials to attend the event with the aim of being disruptive. Compartmentalisation of our buildings into public and restricted areas creates the potential also for innocent or malicious intrusion into restricted areas where mechanical, chemical, biological and radiological hazards may exist.

31.6.9 Event organisers should inform buildings security staff when planning a large-scale event to ensure that the security implications are addressed suitably early in the process. Special arrangements may be necessary, for example, if the event is likely to run beyond hours of normally expected buildings occupancy.

31.6.10 Section 20 of this Manual provides guidance on several security-related scenarios.

31.6.11 *Demonstrating Scientific Procedures* – Event organisers planning to demonstrate procedures to groups of visitors should first undertake a formal risk

assessment (see Section 8 of this Manual) which they may wish to discuss with the H&S Manager for University buildings on the Edinburgh bioQuarter campus before finalising plans.

31.6.12 *Equipment* – Event organisers must make special arrangements to receive bulky loads into the building, perhaps for temporary storage, and subsequently setting it up in the venue. If electrical connections have to be made, portable electrical appliances must first be checked for electrical safety. Equipment which has failed PAT testing must *not* be connected to the building’s electrical supply. Equipment *etc* must not be allowed to obstruct fire escape routes and exits.

31.6.13 Care should be taken to avoid any potential for slip/trip injuries associated with trailing cable runs across floors and passageways. Use should be made of cable ties and tread strips to contain and lower the trip potential of cable runs.

31.6.14 In the unexpected event that greater numbers arrive “on the day” than were expected, and which the venue can safely and comfortably accommodate, event organisers must be prepared to cancel the event rather than risk compromising safety; this possibility should also be taken into account in pre-planning for event organisation.

31.7.1 Post-Event: Event organisers must ensure that the venue is left safe and uncluttered after delegates have left the building. It may be useful for organisers to convene a debrief meeting in order to review any learning outcomes that might be of value to the organisers of future events. All accident, incident or “near-miss” occurrence reports must be copied also to the H&S Manager for University buildings on the Edinburgh bioQuarter campus.

31.8.1 Further information: Detailed information on a number of health and safety aspects relevant to the organisation of conferences and large-scale events may be found in the following Sections of this Manual:

- Key Emergency Actions;
- Section 5 (Fire Procedures);
- Section 6 (Disability Policy and Buildings Emergencies);
- Section 8 (Risk Assessment and Supervision)
- Section 11 (Accidents and Near-Miss Reporting);
- Section 20 (Security);
- Section 28 (Auditoria); and
- Section 30 (Offices and Communal Areas).

31.8.2 A *summary of fire and related safety information is available in the form of a PowerPoint presentation to download from within <https://www.ed.ac.uk/medicine-vet-medicine/staff-and-current-students/cmvm-health-and-safety/edinburgh-bioquarter> and project onto screens as delegates assemble for meetings; Annex A to this Section represents a form of the same information that might usefully be included in material to be circulated in advance of a meeting or as part of a delegate pack handed out “on the day”.*

In Case of Emergency

Welcome to University buildings on the Edinburgh bioQuarter campus. Before the conference or other large-scale event begins in one of the public areas of any one of the buildings, you should be aware of the following safety arrangements:



On hearing a Fire Alarm: On hearing a continuously sounding fire alarm (🔊: ~~~~~) or an emergency message broadcast on a public address system, comply with instructions being issued by staff, and follow the white-on-green exit directional signs and leave the building immediately, proceeding directly to the *Evacuation Assembly Point* (which, for the Queen's Medical Research Institute, is located in front the Chancellor's Building, for the Chancellor's Building is around the totem for Car Park 1E, and for the Centre for Regenerative Medicine is the pavement alongside Little France Drive). Lifts must not be used when the fire alarms are sounding continuously.

If the alarm sounds only intermittently (🔊: - - - - -), it is a signal that there may be a problem in another part of the building, but there is no immediate threat to the area where you are currently located. No action need be taken at this stage, but you should be prepared to evacuate if the alarm begins to sound continuously.

Fire alarm signals and actions to be taken in the event of a fire emergency are described on the blue and white *Fire Action Notices* displayed throughout the building.

The event organiser will tell you if any fire alarm tests are scheduled during your visit.



People with Mobility Impairment: Special guidance for disabled people will be provided to each disabled person when they make themselves known to event organisers.



Illness: Please inform an event organiser if you are feeling unwell or require medical assistance for any reason.



Help: Please inform an event organiser or ask at the Reception Desk if you have any other special requirements.

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