

Risk management, insurance and occupational health and safety



The University is committed to promoting a culture of formally and systematically identifying, assessing and managing risk. In 2007, the University continued to develop tools to assist in risk management, as well as expanding the risk management framework.

Audit, risk management and assurance

During 2007, the first stage of the University's risk management framework was completed. The top 20 risks have been finalised along with the relevant causes, controls and planned improvements.

In addition, stage one of the Business Continuity and Crisis Management Plans was completed during the year. The Crisis Management Plan has been completed to draft stage and will be tested during January and February 2008

Responsibility for the University's insurance function was fully integrated into the audit, risk management and assurance structure in 2007.

Occupational health and safety achievements during 2007

During 2007, the University consolidated its programs for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its staff, students and visitors, and effective injury management and coordination of return to work for employees claiming workers compensation.

Expanding the auditing program

In 2007, for the first time, a high-risk OHS audit was conducted, which differentiated between departments involved with obvious OHS risks and those without such risks. The audit was carried out for units involved with hazardous activities such as:

- working with hazardous substances
- biological hazards
- ionising radiation
- machinery
- outdoor and field work
- regular use of contractors.

In addition to formal OHS auditing, the University's network of zone OHS Committees actively monitored and promoted OHS in conjunction with the Central OHS Committee. Other high-level committees provided direction and promotion of safe, compliant research involving gene technology and ionising radiation.

Linking risk management and University priorities

The annual audit plan is directly linked to the University's Strategic Plan. Once again in 2007, audit tasks focused on ensuring that University OHS processes and systems are adequate to achieve our strategic aspirations. Where appropriate, audit reports included comment on the progress in respect to the strategic direction aspirations.

Training and emergency management

A broad range of OHS training was provided for staff and research students in key OHS risk areas ranging from working with hazardous substances, to 4WD vehicle driver-safety training. Training in new CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation) procedures and other development opportunities was provided for the University's network of first aid officers.

Building emergency management arrangements were enhanced, although challenged at times by construction works across the Camperdown Campus.

Safety promotion events were also held across the University during Safe Work Australia Week in October. These events were held at Camperdown, Cumberland, Camden and Sydney College of the Arts campuses at the same time as national safety promotions.

Peter Dunlop Memorial OHS Award

The Peter Dunlop Memorial OHS Award for 2007 was awarded to Valerie Odewahn, Sydney College of the Arts. The judging panel unanimously agreed that Ms Odewahn should receive the award in recognition of her sustained and ongoing 20 year commitment to the improvement of health and safety at Sydney College of the Arts.

The annual OHS award had been successfully revamped to renew interest in this event promoting OHS at the University. Five nominations were received for the 2007 OHS Award.

OHS, workers compensation and injury management:

The OHS and Injury Management (OHSIM) unit facilitates the management of OHS risks within the University and arising from University activities. In 2007, the unit continued to promote the highest possible standard of occupational health, safety and welfare within the University in line with social and legal obligations. A focus on OHS and injury management in the University aims to minimise the social and financial effects of workplace injury and illness through the provision of timely, safe and durable return-to-work programs.

Several projects commenced in 2007 to address key injury risk areas, including manual handling and office ergonomics. Computer-related overuse injuries were the most common reason for compensation claims. A trial of computer software designed to reduce these overuse injuries was successfully conducted in a number of high-risk areas. The WorkPace software monitors the level of computer use and offers on-screen reminders to workers who are at risk of an overuse injury to take breaks and perform basic body stretches. The software is progressively being made more widely available.

The number of claims made for workers compensation insurance fell by 11 per cent from 2006. Of the 223 claims made in 2007, 41 per cent were significant enough to require rehabilitation. A 99 per cent return to work rate was achieved for 2007, with all but one employee able to return to work at the University.

	2007	2006
Claims for workers compensation	223	228
Claims requiring rehabilitation	91	92
Return-to-work rate	99%	97%

