



Internal Responsibility System for Health & Safety

McGill University is committed to providing a safe environment for faculty, staff, students and visitors. To this end, the Internal Responsibility System (IRS) was developed to provide a clear framework for conformance to external health and safety regulations.

Statement of Meaning

In keeping with the underlying principle of the Quebec Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety (Quebec OHS Act), McGill's IRS provides a framework within which each person at McGill, regardless of role or title, has direct and shared responsibility for health and safety. According to the IRS, each individual at the University is responsible for following established safety protocols and standards, for taking initiative on health and safety issues, and for working to solve problems and make continuous improvements in the workplace.

This document outlines McGill's IRS, according to which all members of the University have well-defined responsibilities for dealing with health and safety issues. Each individual at McGill is expected to be familiar with these responsibilities as delineated below.

Statement of Authority, Accountability & Responsibility

1. Individuals

a. Students

In the context of the IRS, students are full members of the University community. Consistent with the intent of the [Charter of Students' Rights](#) (e.g., article 7 regarding the University's "obligation to maintain safe and suitable conditions of learning and study"), each student must take all reasonable care to preserve a healthy and safe learning environment, and refrain from actions that might adversely affect that environment (including, for example, actions prohibited in Section B, Non-Academic Offenses, articles 5 through 15, of the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#)).

Where students are paid to perform work they become workers under the [Quebec Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety](#) (R.S.Q. c. S-2.1) and therefore have the same rights and responsibilities outlined in this document and the Act. In addition, any individual performing work on university premises, not for pay, but for educational and other authorized purposes is considered by the University to have rights and responsibilities under the University's Health & Safety System (see definitions below) and supporting programs.

In cases where student conduct fails to adhere to the IRS, the McGill Code of Student Conduct shall apply.

b. Employees and Individuals Receiving Remuneration

Every McGill employee is a "worker" within the meaning of the [Quebec Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety](#) (R.S.Q. c. S-2.1) and, as such, has the rights and responsibilities as outlined in the Act and is responsible for:



- i. complying with the rules and procedures developed within the Health & Safety System for performing the work in a safe and healthy manner;
- ii. taking an active role in protecting and promoting his or her health and safety;
- iii. refraining from activities which may jeopardize the health and safety of others;
- iv. taking an active role in fulfilling the requirements of applicable EHS Programs under McGill's Health & Safety System with a view to fulfilling the intent of the Health & Safety Mission Statement; and
- v. correcting or reporting forthwith to his or her supervisor, any observed hazards or lapses in the functioning of the Health & Safety System.

Disregard of the IRS by employees may result in loss of laboratory privileges and/or suspension of purchasing rights with respect to restricted materials.

2. Supervisors, Professors, Principal Investigators, Laboratory Directors

a. Supervising Faculty and Staff, including Principal Investigators and Laboratory Directors

Any faculty or staff member having charge over an area or activity or with any degree of authority over an individual is responsible to their respective Chair or Unit Head (e.g., Executive Director, Academic Director) for ensuring that:

- i. any observed hazards or lapses in the functioning of the health and safety program, and other safety concerns are dealt with promptly;
- ii. all individuals under their supervision have been informed of the hazards and instructed on the necessary risk control and emergency response measures;
- iii. the applicable University and departmental safety policies, programs, procedures and practices associated with the area and activity under their supervision are communicated and implemented;
- iv. the hazards associated with the area or activity have been identified and the necessary risk control and emergency response measures identified, documented, communicated and implemented; and
- v. risk assessments are performed on all research projects which have actual or potential hazards;
- vi. all individuals engaged in activity associated with the research project are informed and instructed on the hazards and related risk control and emergency measures;
- vii. any individual assigned to a supervisory role is competent; and
- viii. workplace inspections, monitoring, and accident reporting and investigations are routinely conducted to ensure the integrity of risk control and emergency response measures;
- ix. a safety plan which includes their replacement, is prepared by Principal Investigators going on sabbatical leave to ensure adequate supervision of students.

Failure to comply with applicable safety policies, programs, procedures and practices may result in the following actions:

- suspension of laboratory activities or processes found to pose an immediate danger to health and safety
- restrictions of access to apparatus that pose an immediate danger to health and safety
- confiscation of restricted materials that are stored or used in a quantity or manner that poses a danger to health and safety.



- Laboratories found to be not in compliance may be closed and internal permits revoked until compliance is confirmed. Environmental Health and Safety Office approval of internal permits, safety certifications and sign-offs for research grant applications will be withheld for laboratories with inspection scores below 75%.

b. Faculty Members and Instructors

Insofar as the Faculty Member/Instructor is a "worker", the member shall exercise the same rights and duties and be subject to the same consequences of failure to comply with the IRS as a worker, as stated Section 1.b.

Insofar as the Faculty Member/Instructor is a "supervisor", the member shall exercise the rights and duties and be subject to the same consequences of failure to comply with the IRS as a supervisor as stated Section 2.a.

Consistent with these obligations and a duty of care for their students, each Faculty Member and Instructor is responsible to their respective Chair or Academic Director for ensuring that:

- i. the curriculum is designed and conducted to ensure that the management of risk to students reflects the policies, procedures and practices established by the University, the faculty and the academic department, school or centre;
- ii. risk assessments are performed for any activity with inherent risk; and
- iii. students are informed of their rights and responsibilities, the hazards associated with the course activity or environment and that they are instructed on risk and emergency control measures.

c. Supervisors of Independent Contractors

Any McGill employee who is responsible for overseeing a contract for goods or services between McGill and an independent contractor shall ensure that:

- i. the contract documents makes reference to applicable requirements under McGill 's Health & Safety System;
- ii. relevant safety information is communicated between McGill and the independent contractor; and
- iii. contract requirements for complying with McGill's Health & Safety program are monitored and, wherever possible, enforced throughout the duration of the work being conducted.

3. Chairs and Unit Heads (e.g., Director)

A chair or head of a department, school, office, unit or institute (including specialized facilities) shall ensure that:

- i. any unresolved observed hazards or lapses in the functioning of the health and safety program, and other safety concerns are dealt with promptly;
- ii. the programs set out in the Health & Safety System are developed, implemented and maintained within the sector where applicable;



- iii. a Departmental/Unit Safety Officer is appointed to assist the department/unit in fulfilling its obligations and requirements as specified in the Health & Safety System; and
- iv. where necessary (e.g. departments operating wet labs), a Departmental/Unit Safety Committee is formed to assist the Chair or Unit Head in fulfilling the obligations and requirements as specified in the Health & Safety System.

Departments may be held responsible for any damages caused by their failure to comply with the Health & Safety System.

4. Deans, Executive Directors and equivalent level administrators

The Deans and Executive Directors are responsible to the Provost, Deputy Provost and Vice-Principals for ensuring that:

- i. any reported hazards or lapses in the functioning of the health and safety program and other safety concerns reported by the Chairs and Unit Heads are dealt with promptly;
- ii. the health and safety programs applicable to their faculties, division, units or work areas are developed, implemented and maintained current;
- iii. the annual performance review of those persons reporting to the Deans and Executive Directors includes evidence that the safety functions well and measurement of the performance of applicable responsibilities under the Health & Safety System; and
- iv. the subject of the development, implementation, maintenance and effectiveness of the applicable EHS Programs appears quarterly on the agenda of the Deans' and Executive Directors' review of operations.

5. Provost, Deputy Provost and Vice-Principals

The Provost, Deputy Provost and Vice-Principals are responsible to the Principal for directing the health and safety activities of the University and for ensuring that:

- i. compliance with the Universities Health & Safety System;
- ii. the annual performance review of those persons reporting to the Provost, Deputy Provost and Vice-Principals includes evidence that the Health And Safety System functions well and measurement of the performance of applicable responsibilities under the System; and
- iii. the subject of the development, implementation, maintenance and effectiveness of the Health & Safety System appears semi-annually on the agenda of the Provost, Deputy Provost and Vice-Principals' review of the University's operations.

6. Principal and Vice-Chancellor

The Principal is responsible to the Board of Governors for directing the health and safety activities of the University and for ensuring that:

- i. a Health & Safety System is developed, implemented and maintained current for the University;
- ii. the annual performance review of those persons reporting to the Principal includes measurement of the performance of applicable responsibilities under the Health & Safety System; and



- iii. the subject of the development, implementation, maintenance and effectiveness of the Health & Safety System appears annually on the agenda of the Principal's review of the University's operations.

7. Board of Governors

The Board of Governors is responsible for directing the health and safety activities of the University and for ensuring that:

- i. sufficient resources are allocated for health and safety EHS;
- ii. the annual performance review of the Officers of the University includes measurement of the performance of applicable responsibilities under the Health & Safety System; and
- iii. the subject of the development, implementation, maintenance and effectiveness of the Health & Safety System appears annually on the agenda of the Board's review of the University's operations.

Notification Procedure

All members of the University have a legal right to register concern regarding health and safety issues. Section 227 of the Quebec Act respecting occupational health and safety forbids reprisals against anyone who exercises their rights under the Act, including the right to a safe work environment and the right to training and information related to their health and safety. The IRS encourages all members of the University community to exercise these rights by notifying the responsible supervisor of any concerns. Failing this, additional avenues are available. These include; departmental/faculty safety committees, Security Services (514) 398-3000, the Tips Anonymous Information Hotline (514) 398-TIPS(8477), Fire Prevention (514) 398-3473, and Environmental Health and Safety (514) 398-4563.

The TIPS Hotline is an anonymous information voice mailbox designed to receive tips from the McGill community. It permits McGill community members to remain unidentified while at the same time providing the information needed to help maintain the safety and security of the people and assets of our community.

Upon notification, the party contacted shall verify the concern and report the matter to the appropriate authority, as per the IRS. All confirmed violations must be reported to the responsible party (Department Chair, Director, etc.), who shall exercise their authority to ensure compliance.

Enforcement Actions

Enforcement actions or sanctions are, by default, the responsibility of the violators' immediate superior. However, failing this, or in exceptional circumstances, there may be the need for officials of University Safety to impose enforcement actions or sanctions in order to mitigate an immediate health and safety risk or to avoid legal actions due to repeated failure to abide by safety regulations. These officials include:

- The Director and Associate Directors, University Safety
- EHS Radiation Safety Officer
- EHS Biosafety Officer

Any immediate preventive action will trigger a review of the action by a committee (composition TBD). The committee will be empowered to decide whether to extend the preventive measures, for what period of time, and the conditions to be met to lift the preventive measures. Preventive actions imposed will take



into account the extent and severity of the violation(s) involved and the degree of risk to health and safety or to the legal standing of the University. The official imposing the sanction(s) shall provide prompt, clear notice of the intended action, including providing full justification for the action(s) along with a clear statement of measures required for the sanctions to be averted or lifted, before the committee hearing. The respondent will be afforded sufficient time, as determined by the Chair of the committee, to prepare a response before the committee hearing.

Definitions

Health & Safety System

The Health & Safety System at McGill University consists of the Health and Safety Program and the people responsible for managing it. It is designed to facilitate due diligence as per the intent of the *Quebec Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety* and in respect of McGill's commitment to a duty of care for the learning environment. The system provides the means by which each member of the McGill community can achieve their personal legal obligations inherent in their relationship with McGill.

Health & Safety Program

The written portion of the [Health and Safety System](#), including the policies and protocols approved by University administration and the applicable health and safety committees as well as the administrative functions, such as orientation, training, and inspections required to accomplish the objectives and fulfill the principles of the Health & Safety System.

References

Quebec Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety (R.S.Q. c. S-2.1)

Charter of Students' Rights

Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures