

# **HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

## **Fire Safety Manual Section 2: Fire Precautions Procedures**

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**Health and Safety Service**

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HSSPG27	Fire Safety Manual Section 2: Fire Precautions and Procedures

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of the University Fire Safety Policy is to reduce the risks to people and property from fire through a combination of fire-prevention and effective emergency arrangements. Part Two of the Fire Safety Manual outlines these arrangements which can be summarised as follows:

- Well designed buildings which incorporate fire prevention features, effective detection and alarm systems and suitable protected escape routes.
- Sensible working practices within buildings which reduce the risk of fire, including safe processes and equipment and good standards of housekeeping.
- Responsible behaviour from staff, students and others; both in reducing fire risks and in responding appropriately during emergencies.

### How significant is the risk of fire?

Generally, the loss of life due to fire in UK workplaces is low. This is as a result of established and legally enforced standards, building design and advances in detection and alarm technology.

There are, however, examples of fires in the Higher Education sector, some of which have had a catastrophic impact on research and teaching. In most cases these fires were preventable - and applying attention to improvements only after a significant fire is a very costly approach.



Damage caused by a fire at the University of Southampton in October 2005

### Individual responsibility

To achieve and maintain our objectives will require collective effort; with every single person having a role to play.

Individuals can greatly influence the standards of fire safety in any area and application of a few simple common sense principles is usually sufficient.

Co-operation during fire alarm activations (practices or real incidents) is also essential; with non-compliance being viewed as a serious disciplinary issue.

Members of staff who are responsible for poor housekeeping or wedging open fire doors are placing the rest of the University community at risk and they should be challenged.

**Don't wait until after someone has died in a fire or a building has been seriously damaged before you start thinking about your role in reducing fire risk at the University.**

## 2.2 GENERAL FIRE PRECAUTIONS

Fire doors should be kept closed at all times (unless they are doors which automatically close when the alarm is sounded) to maintain compartmentalisation of the building and to prevent the spread of the fire and/or toxic smoke. Fire doors may only be wedged open in exceptional circumstances and in accordance with the university fire door wedging arrangements.



Fire doors can be very effective at preventing fires from spreading - when closed! The above photographs show both sides of a set of fire doors following a fire.

Corridors, stairways, landings and escape routes must be kept clear at all times of anything that is likely to cause a fire or to impede evacuation in an emergency. Refuges for use by wheelchair users must never be used to store materials, equipment or furniture.

Hazardous materials must be stored, used and disposed of in accordance with all legal requirements and safe working practices.

All fire fighting equipment must be kept free from obstruction and be readily available for use in an emergency. Extinguishers must not be removed or repositioned without authority from the Health and Safety Service (unless as part of a building maintenance/refurbishment project).

Fire alarm call points must be kept free from obstruction and not be covered or obscured from view.

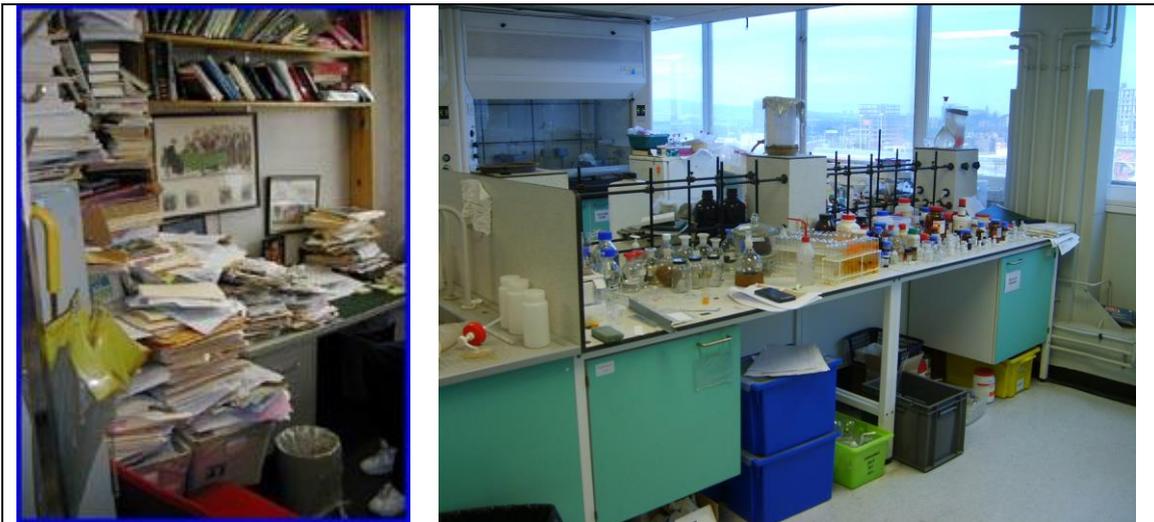
Smoke and fire detectors must not be impeded in their operation (e.g. by installing shelves/furniture or stacking materials close by).

Any obvious or suspected damage to, or misuse of, a fire alarm or fire fighting equipment should be reported immediately to the Facilities Directorate help desk (tel 4444) or to the University Health and Safety Service.

### 2.3 HOUSEKEEPING

Housekeeping is very important when trying to reduce the risks associated with fire. Poor housekeeping can result in excessive amounts of combustible materials being present and can also impede escape from buildings in an emergency.

Effort should be made to ensure that the quantity of combustible materials present are minimised and where possible they are stored in cupboards.



Some examples of poor housekeeping

Waste should also be kept to reasonable quantities and kept in suitable containers. If wheeled bins are used outside, they should be in a secure compound or be secured in a location where they do not pose an arson threat to nearby buildings. Where possible, skips should not be positioned against a building and should normally be a minimum of 6 metres away from any part of a building. Where this is not possible, other measures should be taken to minimise the risk of arson.



Potential target for an arson attack?

If any member of staff becomes aware of poor housekeeping that represents a fire risk, they should talk to local members of staff to try to make immediate improvements. If this is not possible, the details should be reported to the manager responsible for the area or, if necessary, to the Facilities Directorate help desk (on ext 4444).

Formal inspections and informal management 'walkabouts' should monitor housekeeping arrangements and standards. Periodic checks by Fire Marshals should also include monitoring housekeeping standards (see 2.9.1).

For further guidance on housekeeping and workplace inspections see the relevant Health and Safety Service intranet pages

## 2.4 USE OF HIGHER-RISK SUBSTANCES

Some substances can be considered to have higher fire risks than ordinary combustible materials and, consequently, require more stringent controls. These substances include flammable, highly flammable and extremely flammable substances which are generally defined (by the HSE Approved Classification and Labelling Guide) as follows:

**Flammable** - liquid substances and preparations having a flashpoint equal to or more than 21 °C and less than or equal to 55 °C.

**Highly Flammable** - liquid substances and preparations having a flashpoint below 21 °C but which are not extremely flammable.

Also - solid substances which may readily catch fire after a brief contact with a source of ignition and which continue to burn or to be consumed after removal of the source of ignition.

**Extremely Flammable** - liquid substances and preparations having a flashpoint lower than 0 °C and a boiling point lower or equal to 35 °C.

Also - gaseous substances which are flammable in contact with air at ambient temperature and pressure.

Guidance on the use and storage of higher risk substances can be found on the relevant pages of the Health and Safety Service intranet site.

## 2.5 SMOKING

The University has a statutory duty to ensure that the working environment is healthy, so far as is reasonably practicable under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Health Act 2006 provides for a ban in England and Wales on smoking in enclosed places to which the public have access.

It must also seek to discourage furtive smoking, which may constitute a fire risk.

All buildings under the control of the University will be smoke free and smoking is also prohibited immediately outside buildings.

The designated smoking areas at city campus are:

- On the concourse area between the Norfolk Building and the Adsetts Centre
- On the concourse area between the Atrium and the Eric Mensforth Building

At Collegiate Crescent Campus there are no designated smoking areas.

Smokers should be particularly careful when extinguishing and disposing of cigarettes before entering premises. Where cigarette bins are provided they should be used.

The smoking and charging of electronic cigarettes in University buildings and vehicles is prohibited.

The University No Smoking policy can be viewed at:

<https://portal.shu.ac.uk/departments/HRD/polproc/Pages/nosmoke.aspx>

## 2.6 PROHIBITED ITEMS AND PRACTICES

To help to reduce the likelihood of fires and false alarms occurring there are a number of items and practices that are prohibited. Generally, throughout the University, these are:

- **Candles, tea lights, incense sticks** and similar items - unless specific exceptions have been agreed with the Health and Safety Service.
- **Toasters** - with the exception of in kitchens within halls of residence, Facilities Directorate catering outlets and any other area where staff work night shifts and there has been a formal agreement with the Health and Safety Service.
- **Fireworks**
- **Multi-socket block adapters** - Multi-socket extension cables are not prohibited.
- **'Daisy chains'** - the practice of connecting several mains extension cables together.



In halls of residence the following items are also prohibited:

- **Halogen lights**
- **Chip pans and deep fat fryers**
- **Barbeques**
- **Highly/extremely flammable liquids/items**

## 2.7 FIRE ACTION PROCEDURES

### 2.7.1 General Staff Instruction

Fire procedures are posted throughout the University and can be found on exit routes normally adjacent to fire alarm call points or portable fire extinguishers.

All members of staff should ensure that they are familiar with the alternative means of escape in case of fire by walking the routes from the area in which they are employed.

Staff should get to know their assembly points which are indicated on the fire action notices displayed throughout the building. The information is also available on the Health and Safety Service web site and included in the on-line fire awareness training course.

If you have to evacuate the premises:

- **DO** exit quickly and calmly
- **DO** go directly to open air
- **DO NOT** enter an adjacent building
- **DO NOT** stop to collect bags
- **DO** close the door behind you
- **DO NOT** use lifts

Any members of staff not at their usual work station on hearing the evacuation signal must leave the building and go to the assembly point. On no account must they return to their own workplace.

The fire alarm call points can be found on corridors and adjacent to final exit doors. **Note - call points are coloured red.** The green ones are for releasing door locks in emergencies.

When the fire alarm sounds, all magnetic door locks in the area/building affected should automatically release. If any member of staff discovers one that doesn't, they should report it to a fire marshal, Security, the Health and Safety Service or to the Facilities Directorate help desk on ext. 4444.

In most of the larger buildings Fire Marshals are utilised. Any instructions they give to staff or students must be complied with as they are exercising their duties under the direct authority of the Vice Chancellor.

## 2.7.2 Procedure

**Any person suspecting or discovering a fire should:**

- Raise the alarm by using the nearest fire alarm call point.
- Inform Security Control by dialling 888 (from a safe place) and inform them of the fire. Security Control will then call the Fire Service.
- Should there be any problem or delay in contacting Security Control, call the Fire Service direct by dialling 999 (or 9-999 on an internal phone) and give the correct address of the building and any other information they require. Inform Security that you have done this.
- If possible, tackle the fire with the correct type of extinguisher - **but only if it is safe to do so and you have received practical, "hands on" training in the use of extinguishers** (see section 2.11).
- If circumstances dictate or if ordered to do so, leave the building by the nearest available exit route and report to a Fire Marshal, Security Officer or Fire Officer to provide them with details of the fire.
- Proceed to the assembly point or other location, as instructed.

**Any person hearing a continuously sounding fire alarm should:**

- Leave the building by the nearest available exit route - **NOT USING LIFTS**.
- Go directly to the assembly point.
- Never re-enter the building until informed it is safe to do so by a Security Officer or a member of the University Health and Safety Service. Never re-enter a building whilst the alarm is still sounding.

**Any person hearing an intermittently sounding fire alarm should:**

- Be aware that this is an alert signal but there is not a requirement to evacuate.
- Should the signal change to a continuous sound then there is a requirement to leave the building as detailed above.

## 2.8 PROVISIONS FOR PERSONS WITH INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

### 2.8.1 Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)

All people who have individual needs that may impact on their ability to evacuate a building in an emergency should have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). The PEEP policy and guidance can be found on the Health and Safety Service intranet site.

### 2.8.2 Wheelchair Users and Other People with Mobility Impairment

On floors that do not have a horizontal escape route, safe refuges are available to be used by wheelchair users and others, in the event of a fire alarm activation. In some cases (generally in newer buildings) the refuge will be a purpose-designed one. In other cases refuges will simply be a fire-resisting enclosure such as a staircase or lift lobby. In both cases there should be signs that clearly indicate that the area is a refuge. Each refuge (whether purpose-designed or not) has a means of two-way communication with Security.

In most cases a fire alarm activation will be a false alarm so any person using a refuge will be asked to remain in the refuge until the alarm has been silenced. In the very unlikely event that there is a real fire and there is a need to evacuate the person in the refuge, Security personnel (or other trained staff members) or the Emergency Services will evacuate the person using an evacuation chair or by other means as detailed in the PEEP.

### 2.8.3 Deaf or Hearing Impaired Persons

Currently, there are few visual fire alarm signals within the University. Deaf or hearing impaired members of staff or students who are likely to be working in an isolated area are encouraged to advise an appropriate member of staff of this fact so that they may be notified of any alarm situation. Additionally, "Deaf Alerter" pagers are available for use in University buildings. When the fire alarm is activated they vibrate and display the name of the building where the activation has occurred. They are available for students from Disabled Student Support (Student and Learning Services). For members of staff and visitors they are available from Security Control at City Campus.

#### 2.8.4 Blind or Visually Impaired Persons

Blind or visually impaired persons are advised to locate evacuation and assembly points in their early days in the University and should make special arrangements for their evacuation in the event of fire upon arrival at the University.

## 2.9 FIRE MARSHALS

Fire Marshals are appointed to assist in the safe evacuation of all staff, students and other people from pre-designated areas of a building.

Sheffield Hallam University has implemented fire marshalling arrangements in most of its larger buildings. Fire Marshals are trained to assist staff, students and other people evacuate the area of the building when the fire alarm sounds. Training is carried out by members of the university Health and Safety Service and is designed to provide Fire Marshals with the generic information that they need to be competent to carry out the role. Additionally, the training enables any of them to act as a Lead Fire Marshal and to be the main point of contact with Security Services or the Emergency Services.

The formal training should be supplemented with familiarity of the building within which they are to carry out the role. They should be familiar with all the exit points for their area and will direct staff, students and visitors towards the most appropriate available exit.

Fire Marshals are **not** trained to be fire fighters. Their primary role is to aid the evacuation of the building.

### 2.9.1 General Fire Marshal Duties

Fire Marshals have an important proactive fire safety role. Generally, they should be very familiar with local fire safety arrangements and the building layout, including all available escape routes. Specifically, they should:

- Carryout periodic checks of their area to identify any fire related problems. These could include damaged fire doors, blocked escape routes, presence of excessive amounts of combustible material/waste, missing fire extinguishers, etc. Where problems are identified they should, if possible, be rectified immediately. If this is not possible, they should be reported to the manager responsible for the area or, if necessary, to the Facilities Directorate help desk (on ext 4444).
- If a member of staff or a student informs them that they have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), they should become familiar with the PEEP so that they can assist the person, as necessary, during a building evacuation. Note: The PEEP policy and guidance can be found on the Health and Safety Service web site.
- Provide fire safety related information to staff in their area, as appropriate
- Attend fire-related training courses, as required (see 2.12.3)
- Assist in the evacuation of buildings for non-fire emergencies, as required by the person co-ordinating the evacuation.

## 2.9.2 Fire Marshal Duties during a Fire Incident

In the event that a fire alarm sounds, Fire Marshals are to:

- put on a high-visibility tabard - this marks them out as having authority and enables other fire marshals, Security, Health & Safety and the emergency services to quickly identify them
- direct staff, students and visitors towards the **nearest available exit**
- maintain a steady flow of people evacuating the building and prevent 'bottlenecks' building up by redirecting people towards other available exits
- direct people away from potential sources of fire, if they are known
- ensure (as far as they can) that the floor/area is clear or is actively evacuating
- if people are not evacuating, INSTRUCT them to leave the building, if they refuse, note who they are and where they are
- ensure that any disabled people present are evacuating or in disabled person refuges
- leave the building themselves by the nearest available exit
- report to the fire control point. This is the place where Security will meet the Fire Marshals (usually the main entrance to the building or some other pre-designated location)
- If there is more than one fire marshal present, agree the person who will act as lead fire marshal and inform him/her of the status of their area, including the presence of people in refuges and anyone who has refused to evacuate
- remain at the fire control point so that they can be re-deployed to aid in controlling other aspects of the evacuation, to prevent re-entry to the building (until safe to do so), to provide information to people who have evacuated (or others wanting to enter the building) or to be at the disposal of the senior officer of the emergency services on site.
- take part in a short de-briefing session with the other fire marshals once permission to re-enter the building is given.

In the event that a fire alarm sounds and fire marshals are away from their usual place of work they should:

- NOT attempt to return to their usual pace of work but simply evacuate the building
- if they know the area well, offer to help the fire marshal for the area but only if they are confident to do so safely.

## 2.9.3 Lead Fire Marshal Duties

The Lead Fire Marshal will:

- record details of status reports from Fire Marshals
- provide this information to Security Services or the senior officer from the emergency services, on request
- inform Security or the senior officer from emergency services of the location of any person who is known to be waiting for evacuation in a refuge

- inform Security or the senior officer from emergency services of the location of any person who refused to evacuate
- remain at the fire control point until told to stand down or asked to carry out some other function by the senior officer from emergency services
- co-ordinate a de-briefing session with the other Fire Marshals and provide feedback to the University Health and Safety Service.

## 2.10 LECTURERS AND OTHER PERSONS WHO SUPERVISE STUDENTS

Lecturers and other persons who supervise students are responsible for ensuring the safety of the students and should make themselves aware of the fire procedures (and assembly point) for the buildings in which they lecture/work.

On hearing the fire alarm (or if asked to evacuate the building), they should:

- inform students that they must evacuate the building and report to the assembly point or other designated place (informing them of its location);
- ensure that students then leave the room in a calm and orderly manner;
- if possible, ensure that apparatus/machinery is left in a safe condition;
- ensure that nobody uses a lift;
- ensure that the students leave the building and go to the assembly point;
- if informed that a student has a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), ensure that the student evacuates or reports to a refuge in accordance with their PEEP (the PEEP policy and guidance can be found on the Health and Safety Service intranet site).
- ensure that no-one returns to the building until told it is safe to do so.

## 2.11 THE ROLE OF SECURITY SERVICES

Security Services has a crucial role in fire safety management within the University. The Security Control Room is staffed 7 days a week and 24 hours a day. There is also a mobile presence in the form of Security Patrollers. Whenever a fire alarm activation occurs (or some other potential emergency situation arises) they will react immediately and take control of the situation or assist the person who assumes control.

They also have a proactive role regarding fire safety management. This includes the routine monitoring of housekeeping standards, inappropriate storage of materials and equipment in fire escape routes, checking the condition of fire doors, missing fire extinguishers, etc.

All Security personnel are required to attend fire evacuation management training and evacuation chair training (see 2.13).

### 2.11.1 The Role of Security Services during a Fire Incident

In the event that a fire alarm sounds, Security will:

- Send a patroller/controller to investigate the alarm activation to determine the cause

- Send another patroller/controller to the fire control point to meet the fire marshals and determine the status of the evacuation
- Communicate with anyone who is in a refuge to reassure them that they are safe and that it is highly likely to be a false alarm.
- Note the time of the fire alarm activation and monitor time elapsing.
- In the event that the activation is a false alarm
  - silence the alarm. **Note** - the alarm should not be silenced until Security are confident that everyone has evacuated the building. If the alarm is silenced before the evacuation is completed it will cause confusion
  - give the all-clear to allow people to re-enter the building
  - inform people in refuges that it is safe to return to their place of work, classroom, etc.
  - determine the cause of the false alarm and report details to the Health and Safety Service using the standard reporting form
- In the event that the activation has been caused by a real fire or three minutes has elapsed since the alarm was activated
  - call the fire service
  - report the incident, as required by the Major Incident Plan or other arrangements, as appropriate
  - evacuate any person in a refuge, who may be affected by the fire, using an evacuation chair
  - meet the fire service at the designated meeting point and ensure that details of the status of the evacuation are passed onto the officer in charge
  - offer assistance to the officer in charge and co-ordinate the activities of fire marshals and other members of staff as required by the fire service
  - prevent re-entry to the building until the fire service state that it is safe to re-enter
  - In the event that significant damage has been caused by the fire, secure the building or any affected parts of the building
  - For minor fires (e.g. external bin fires, grill pan fires, etc.) determine the cause and report details to the Health and Safety Service using the standard reporting form
  - For more significant fires provide information to assist investigation by the Health and Safety Service, the on-call manager or the emergency services

## 2.12 USE OF FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

**Fire extinguishers should only be used when it is safe to do so and only by people who have received "hands-on" training in their use.**

It is very important that the correct type of extinguisher is used for the type of fire to be extinguished. If the wrong type is used there is a risk of making the fire worse and/or causing injury to the person using the extinguisher.

For detailed guidance on the types of extinguisher available in the University and the types of fire that they should be used on, see the relevant Health and Safety Service intranet pages.

This information is also available in the on-line fire awareness training (see 2.13.1).

## **2.13 TRAINING, INSTRUCTION AND INFORMATION**

### **2.13.1 Fire Awareness Training (mandatory for all members of staff)**

All members of staff are **required** to carry out fire awareness training at least every 2 years. This will mean carrying out the on-line training available via the Health and Safety Service intranet pages.

### **2.13.2 Fire Extinguisher Training**

Members of staff who are most likely to be in a position where they may need to use a fire extinguisher (e.g. people who work in laboratories/workshops, Estates staff, Security, etc.) should attend the "hands-on" practical training course arranged by the Health and Safety Service. Staff should attend refresher training every three years.

### **2.13.3 Fire Evacuation Management Training**

All members of staff who may be involved in the evacuation of a building during a fire incident must attend the fire evacuation management training course arranged by the Health and Safety Service. This includes all Security Services personnel and all nominated/volunteer Fire Marshals. The training should be attended every two years.

### **2.13.4 Evacuation Chair Training**

Security personnel and other designated members of staff who may be required to use an evacuation chair to evacuate a member of staff, student or visitor must attend formal training in its use. Those trained should periodically refresh themselves of how to use the chair and attend formal refresher training every three years.

### **2.13.5 Staff and Student Inductions**

All staff and student inductions must include information about the university's fire safety arrangements and local, building-specific information, as appropriate.

## **2.14 EVACUATION DRILLS**

The Health and Safety Service aims to carry out managed evacuation drills for every university building at least once every year.

Members of staff and students have a responsibility to co-operate during the drill by evacuating the building and reporting to the assembly point - even if they become aware that it is a drill. Following the drill, staff and students should report any problems experienced or witnessed to a Fire Marshal, a member of Security Services or to the Health and Safety Service staff carrying out the drill.

Fire Marshals should carry out their duties as if the alarm activation has been caused by a real fire. Following the drill, they should report to the member of Health and Safety Service staff that is co-ordinating the drill so that they can be de-briefed and give feedback.

Where evacuation drills identify problems, these will be rectified by the Health and Safety Service in conjunction with the building management, Security Services or FD Estates as appropriate. Where appropriate, the drill will be repeated at a later date.

Details of the evacuation drills carried out this year to-date can be seen on the Health and Safety Service intranet site.

## **2.15 PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH STAFF, STUDENTS AND VISITORS WHO FAIL TO RESPOND TO FIRE ALARMS**

### **2.14.1 STAFF**

Where members of staff are found to have not responded to the fire alarm, i.e. not proceeding without delay to the nearest exit, the following measures will be applied:

- Staff will be asked to identify themselves
- A copy of the basic fire information card will be provided
- They will be informed that there will be a requirement for them to complete the on-line fire awareness training course within fourteen days and that further action may be taken
- The Health and Safety Service will check that fire awareness training has been completed within the set period. Failure to do so will be reported to the member of staff's Faculty or Directorate senior management.
- Serious non-compliance will be referred to the University staff disciplinary process.

### **2.15.2 STUDENTS**

Where students fail to respond;

- Students will be asked to identify themselves
- A copy of the basic fire information card will be provided
- Where students respond abusively or otherwise breach normal conduct, Security will be asked to intervene (to the extent it is reasonable to do so during the emergency evacuation)
- Serious non-compliance will be referred to the University student disciplinary process.

### **2.15.3 VISITORS**

Where visitors fail to respond;

- Visitors will be asked who they are visiting and to confirm they had been given information on fire emergency response
- A copy of the basic fire information card will be provided
- Where it is found that fire emergency information had not been given, the Health and Safety Service will contact the relevant member of staff to remind him/her of the requirement.