

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF RISK OFFICER

Occupational Health and Safety Strategy - Transformation 2030



Message from the Chief Risk Officer

Dear members of the University community,

In the dynamic environment of academia and research, where exploration, innovation, and discovery thrive, it is paramount that we maintain the health, safety and well-being of our community. We live in the present and learn from the past, but it is critical that we prepare for the future. I am pleased to share with you a comprehensive and industry-leading strategy that will fundamentally improve our workplace safety culture and further protect all members of our University community.

Our commitment to excellence extends beyond celebrating academic achievements to instilling the fundamental principle that every person has the right to work and study in a healthy and safe environment. Our health and safety strategy seeks to seamlessly integrate leading practices into the fabric of our institution to promote our collective responsibility for the well-being of our community.

Our commitment in [Policy 77](#) features prominently in our strategy. Now that we have designed, developed, and implemented our Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS), we look to the medium- and long-term future and share with you our next steps.

Our strategy reflects our unwavering commitment to creating and sustaining an environment that nurtures intellectual curiosity and excellence while safeguarding the health and well-being of all individuals within our community. As we embrace this vision, we embark on a collective journey to foster a culture that will become a hallmark of our institution, with uOttawa leading the way in terms of occupational health and safety in the post-secondary sector.

This strategy seamlessly aligns with Transformation 2030, and by sharing our vision with you, we will jointly evolve together, as a community.

Carolina de Moura
Chief Risk Officer



Our vision

To be a leader in workplace environmental health and safety that delivers value to University operations.

Core aspirations

Mission

To maximize engagement in health, safety and environmental programs, and to integrate health, safety and environmental considerations into decision-making processes.

Mandate

To promote the OHS Management System while undertaking institutional activities to enhance the ability of the University community to safely innovate, lead, and explore.

Guiding principles

- **LEADERSHIP** – looking for new and innovative ways to solve environmental, health and safety challenges
- **EXCELLENCE** – setting high standards and goals while delivering through performance
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** – holding ourselves and others to account for their actions, decisions, and obligations
- **COLLABORATION** – believing that by working together, we achieve greater success
- **INTEGRITY** – operating with transparency and trust in living up to our commitments

Developing our vision

To achieve a goal, there needs to be a plan. The result never “just happens” and safety is no different. The University community needs to know the direction we want safety to go, and by outlining and sharing our vision with our community, we will evolve our health and safety program into one that has yet to be matched by any post-secondary institution.

Throughout the development process, we asked members of the University community to join us in thinking big. We relied on input from faculty members, support staff, subject matter experts, and our partners to create the first long-term vision for health and safety. As a post-secondary institution, we have a social responsibility to set an example for our students and to inspire them as the leaders of tomorrow. This includes consideration for the safe and healthy workplaces that our students will build and shape. Our students will witness safety leadership firsthand.

Step 1 – Occupational Health and Safety Management System

We started with an evaluation. In 2021, we took a critical look at our laboratory safety operations and identified areas for improvement. Ultimately, this kick-started the development of an Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS) that engaged all levels of the organization. The OHSMS looked at how health and safety are implemented at uOttawa, including the accountability structure and governance. The first long-term safety strategy began to take shape, culminating with its full implementation in 2023.

Step 2 – Opportunities

Much like accredited programs in academia, the Chief Prevention Officer (CPO) of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) may give accreditation and recognition to an employer. Accreditation is voluntary but is very powerful in evolving the safety culture and in maintaining a healthy and safe work environment for our community. It also provides significant financial incentive. We held preliminary discussions with provincial government authorities, including the MLITSD and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). A roadmap to accreditation, but more importantly, a sustained safety transformation, started to materialize.

Step 3 – Conceptualization

Internal subject matter experts, senior managers, campus resources, and members of the Joint Health and Safety Committee were asked to further expand and discuss the vision; we gathered their feedback and further refined key elements. The vision provides a clear direction of how safety is a critical part of our institution and how the journey to achieve the result serves to do much more for our institution.

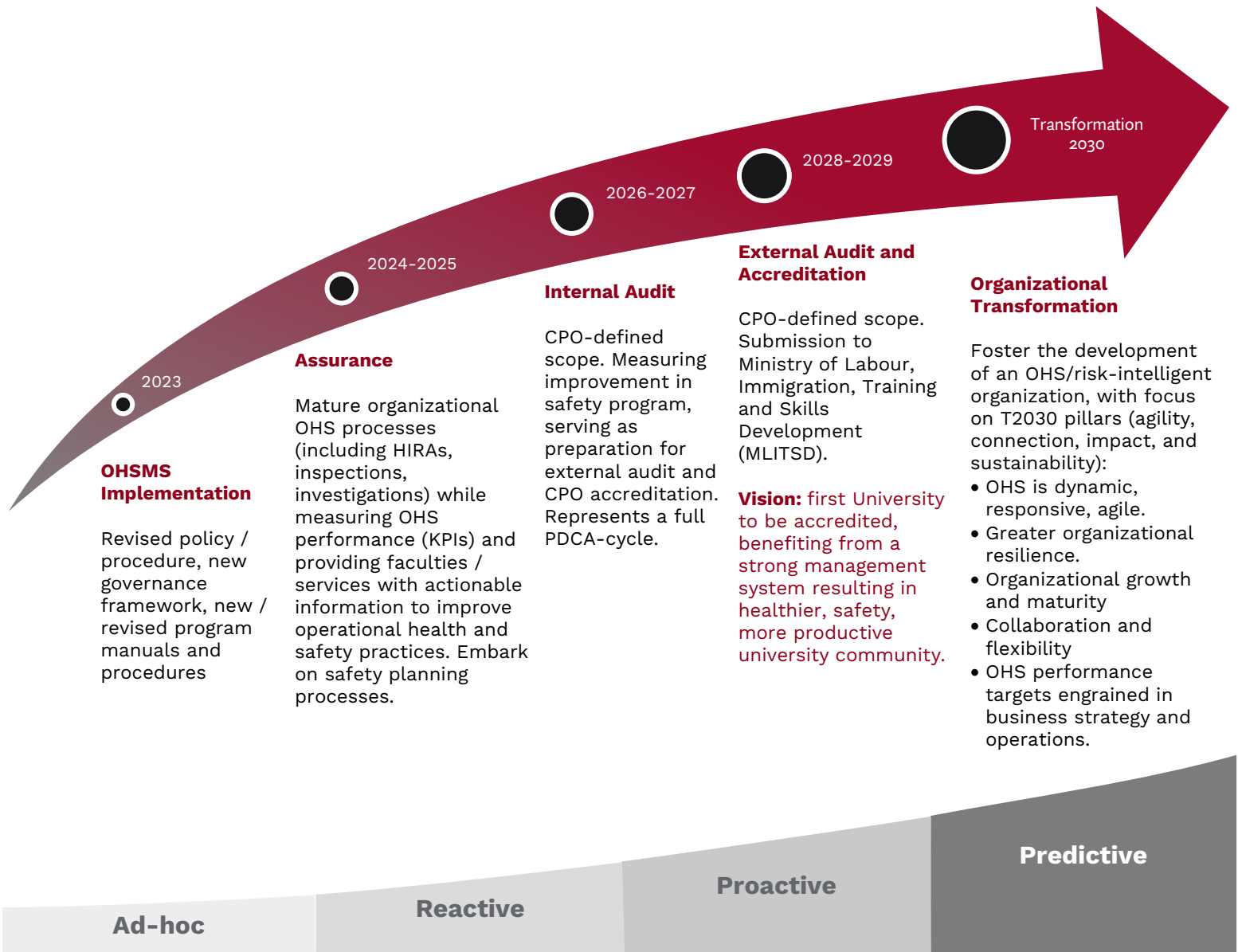
Step 4 – Future State

The first Institutional Strategy for Occupational Health and Safety was presented to the Administration Committee. The strategy will be shared with our community and presented to faculties and services to provide clear direction for a future in which health and safety is a core value of our institution and of all members of the University community.

Timeline

The continued campus health and safety evolution is broken down into distinct phases, each with major milestones to achieve success and improve its sustainability. The Occupational Health and Safety Management System implemented in 2023 has allowed the institution to take a quantum leap toward this vision. The strategy consists of three phases:

Figure 1. OHS strategy timeline 2023 - 2030



Phase 1 – Measurement, Assurance, and Planning (2024-2025)

A key principle of Policy 77 is to measure and communicate health and safety performance. The OHSMS establishes these requirements both internally (within the faculty or service) and through the Office of the Chief Risk Officer through the “lines of defence” model. During Phase 1, the Office of the Chief Risk Officer is identifying key performance indicators (KPIs) for health and safety. These metrics support the implementation of the OSHMS and will be revisited throughout Phase 1 with faculty and service senior management.

Managers within faculties and services will follow the plan-do-check-act model to set their health and safety priorities, execute their plan, review their performance accordingly, and make measurable improvements. The Office of the Chief Risk Officer will provide second-line assistance to faculty and service senior management and to executive management at the appropriate frequency.

The **desired outcome** for Phase 1 is the engagement and understanding of the current state from faculty/service/University, with measurable evolution through subsequent cycles. We expect executive and senior management to incorporate safety into business operations through the plan-do-check-act model.

Phase 2 – Internal Audit (2026-2027)

Phase 2 will focus on the effectiveness of the OHSMS design and implementation. We will use the accreditation requirements of the Chief Prevention Officer as the audit scope to conduct an internal audit that will cover:

- i. Leadership, commitment, and participation
- ii. Planning and implementation
- iii. Evaluation

The **desired outcome** of Phase 2 will be the continued maturity of the management system, with the final audit report objectively identifying gaps within the institutional safety program and its implementation, which the University can then address.

Phase 3 – External Audit (2028-2029)

Phase 3 follows a process similar to that of Phase 2: the audit scope focuses on the same criteria as in Phase 2, but the audit will be conducted by external authorities rather than internal ones.

The **desired outcome** for Phase 3 is a management system that continues to mature but is now consistently adapting. A final audit report will objectively identify gaps within the institutional safety program and its implementation, and the University can then address these gaps.

Once the external audit has been completed and closed out, we will submit the

evidentiary documentation to the MLITSD for verification, validation, and accreditation. As of 2024, very few employers, and no post-secondary institutions, have achieved provincial accreditation of their health and safety management systems. The University of Ottawa is aiming to be the first post-secondary institution in the province to achieve accreditation.

Execution

Through a deliberate, disciplined, and transparent approach, uOttawa will implement these three phases through:

- Detailed operational plans, including roadmaps and milestones, clearly connected to the priorities
- Progress updates that focus on outcomes, measure performance, and assess value for uOttawa executive and senior management
- Visible initiatives by campus leaders to ensure accountability for health and safety practices and culture across the organization
- Regular, clear, and transparent communication with key stakeholders as progress is made
- Leadership and commitment from all members of the University community

Communications

The uOttawa safety team is committed to communicating with the University community in a timely, effective, and transparent way. This plan is designed to:

- Share uOttawa's future vision of occupational health and safety
- Inspire our community and guide them in integrating health and safety into their daily operations
- Inform all University community members of how uOttawa will achieve continuous improvement and deliver on strategic priorities for workplace health and safety
- Contribute to the University's strategic plan

Sharing this vision and plan with internal stakeholders will ensure that the uOttawa community understands the direction of occupational health and safety within the institution. This will include discussing issues in faculty and service town halls and group presentations; communicating expectations through in-person and digital channels; making the plan and resources accessible; and integrating decision-making as outlined in this plan.

What's next

OCRO has already started the University's journey by discussing performance with faculties and services to provide context for the next steps in our evolution. Tools and resources will follow to support the subsequent phases and the evolution of our institutional health and safety culture.

Contacts us

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