



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Inspection Policy HSPG 36

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Introduction

The law requires that the University has arrangements in place for monitoring health and safety. This includes routine inspections to check that health and safety standards are being followed and are effective at controlling health and safety risks and meeting legal requirements.

Inspections also provide an opportunity for managers to proactively demonstrate their commitment to achieving a safe and healthy workplace.

The outcome of health and safety inspections must be recorded, along with responsibilities and timescales for action.

Health & safety inspections are an important monitoring tool to help ensure that workplace hazards are controlled and that risk to employees and others are eliminated or minimised. Inspections should be carried out regularly. Persons carrying out the inspections should be competent to do so and be aware of the actual and potential risks associated with the area being inspected.

The inspection should cover all physical parts of the premises and include relevant documentation, for example legally required tests and examinations on equipment such as Portable Electrical Appliance Testing (PAT) and fire extinguisher examination labels. To obtain a true picture of conditions and practices under the working environment, where appropriate, inspections should be done when workplaces are occupied by staff and students. Checklists are available for different types of workplaces and set out the key requirements to be considered in inspections.

Inspection reports produced should include:

- Observations made and hazards identified.
- Any recommendations necessary to eliminate or minimise risk and ensure ongoing legal compliance.
- Information on who will undertake remedial actions and the timescale agreed.

Frequency of formal workplace inspections

The frequency at which formal workplace inspections should be carried out is dependent on the associated risk of the area. The minimum frequency for different types of areas is given below but inspections may be required on a more frequent basis depending on local conditions and use of the area, and any local arrangements for informal checks.

For low risk areas such as offices, libraries and computer laboratories a formal inspection should take place at least once per year. This inspection should ideally be completed by March for inclusion in the annual Safety Statement submitted at the end of April each year.

For other areas which are regularly visited and inspected for maintenance purposes, such as plant rooms, formal inspections should be carried out at least once a year.

For medium to high risk areas such as chemical and biological laboratories used for teaching or research, engineering workshops used for teaching, research or maintenance, and campus catering kitchens, the frequency of inspections should be at least every six months and preferably once per term.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The carrying out of an annual inspection and completion of an inspection action plan within the academic year is a health and safety key performance indicator (KPI). Faculty/Professional Services performance is reported to HSSC as part of the Annual Report on Health and Safety Performance.

The completion of formal health and safety inspections by departments/sections are reported to Health and Safety Officer (HSO) annually and an interim progress report is also issued six monthly. It is therefore important that annual inspections are carried out and action plans submitted.

Local arrangements for informal checks and reporting of hazards

In addition to formal workplace inspections, Faculties/Offices may have local arrangements for day to day checking of areas and equipment and for staff to report hazards that are spotted. Examples are:

- Technical staff checking equipment for damage or faults before use in teaching sessions, and again before returning to store
- 'Front of house' staff carrying out walk-through checks of public access areas before they are opened each day
- Hazard report slips sent as hard copy or email to the Health and Safety Local Officer
- Hazards reported in a standing H&S agenda item at team meetings

Responsibilities

Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that regular formal health and safety inspections are carried out of the areas under their control.

The task can be delegated to other members of staff, however the outcome should be reported back to them. They should also sign the inspection action plan, although for larger departments it is sufficient for the responsible manager for each area to sign action plans for their area of responsibility.

Heads of Departments must:

- Ensure that suitable and sufficient resources are available for workplace safety inspections
- Ensure that workplace safety inspections are scheduled and carried out at the required frequencies

- Agree and ensure that any remedial work required for issues discovered during inspections are acted upon in a timely manner depending on the degree of risk and resources required
- Arrange relevant training for individuals where required

Health and Safety Coordinator or appointed workplace inspection personnel must:

- Carry out scheduled workplace inspections of all areas within their jurisdiction
- Involve Display Screen Equipment Assessors in office inspections, particularly where proposed actions may affect workstations.
- Advise staff on actions they can take for immediate improvements
- Bring any problems or issues discovered during the inspection to the attention of Supervisors, Line Managers or Heads of Departments as required
- Keep records of progress and completion of remedial actions.

Individuals must:

- Keep their own work areas free from hazards which may harm themselves or others
- Report hazards such as blocked escape routes, damaged furniture, failed lights, or faulty equipment to their Line Manager, Supervisor or Health and Safety Coordinator
- Cooperate with Health and Safety Coordinator and others carrying out inspections of their area
- Carry out recommended remedial actions such as tidying their work areas

The H&S team will:

- Provide advice and guidance on workplace safety inspection requirements
- Provide workplace safety inspection training on request
- Review and revise University workplace safety inspection procedures as necessary to ensure compliance with University policies and current legislation

Inspection team

A **union appointed safety representative** should be invited to join the inspection team. To arrange this head of department (or the person delegated responsibility for arranging the inspection) should advise the lead health and Safety Representatives of the trade unions (UCU and Unison) at least two weeks before the proposed inspection date, so that they can agree which representative will join the inspection team.

You may also wish to invite your H&S Group lead to accompany you. We strongly recommend that you do so if it is your first inspection or you are responsible for high risk areas. The adviser will also be able to give guidance on what to look for when carrying out inspections.

Inspection or audit?

An inspection is different to an audit. An inspection is generally limited to an examination of physical conditions so that an assessment can be made of basic legal compliance. A health and safety audit involves collecting information about the health and safety management system and making judgements about its adequacy and performance.

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