

## Guidance Note: Faculty of ESSL Health and Safety Monitoring (Inspections)

### Introduction

Health and safety inspections are a key part of the “active” monitoring element of health and safety management systems with the objective of achieving continual improvements in standards. An inspection is **not** a risk assessment in itself but can often be useful in identifying where specific risk assessments are required or if existing ones need review.

The frequency and depth of inspections should be commensurate with the level of risk. **As a minimum** all areas and activities should be subject to a **“formal annual inspection”** as outlined below. However this may need supplementing with additional **“in house local inspections”** which can vary School by School or department by department e.g. laboratories or workshops. Specific inspections can be used to address particular topics or areas of risk or where standards are found to be poor.

### Formal Annual Health and Safety Inspections ESSL (Schools)

The Faculty Health and Safety Committee (21/04/2009) agreed as a minimum that there will be a schedule of **“formal annual inspections”** carried out in each School. Findings from these inspections will be used to inform the requirement for additional local monitoring activities e.g. the need for additional in house local inspections.

### Purpose

The purpose of the **“formal annual health and safety inspection”** is essentially a **hazard spotting exercise**, involving a **physical examination** of the environment and equipment, systems of work and activities to establish if risks are adequately controlled; also to check compliance with University and local policies and procedures.

The inspection should also cover **health and safety management related aspects** e.g. training arrangements, consultation, policy and communication and risk assessment procedures. It is an ideal opportunity to identify and recognise good practice rather than simply produce a list of defects and therefore should be approached in a positive manner.

The inspection should be led by the Head of School and attended by and with the full participation of the Health and Safety Manager (HSM), the School Health and Safety co-ordinator (HSC), Trade Union Representatives, and relevant specialist advisors.

A report and prioritised action plan should record the findings and clearly state recommendations for any required improvements.

Inspections should not be confused with spot checks, reviews or audits which are explained in more detail at the end of this document.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of School is responsible for:

- Planning, organising, and leading the inspection and ensuring it takes place in line with the agreed schedule. [See Inspection Schedule](#)
- To agree the scope and focus of the inspection with the HSM and HSC.
- Ensuring all relevant participants are invited with adequate notice given.
- Agreeing the summary report and action plan recommendations with the HSM
- Taking ownership of the action plan and ensuring that all identified actions are completed within the timescales agreed.
- Communicating significant findings to School and Faculty Health and Safety Committees.
- Formally reviewing and updating the action plan within 6 months of the inspection.

The role of the Health and safety Co-ordinator is to **assist** the Head of School fulfill their responsibilities as outlined above. During the inspection the Co-ordinator should take detailed notes (this may be on a room by room basis) for follow up at a local level.

The role of the Health and Safety Manager (HSM) is to provide professional advice, information and guidance during the inspection. After the inspection the HSM will produce a summary report and assist with the development of the School action plan. Once the report and recommendations are agreed the Head of School has responsibility for implementation.

Trade Union Representative/s in attendance are regarded as equal partners in the process.

In some circumstances such as inspecting laboratories other specialists may need to be involved in an advisory capacity e.g. academics and technicians who are “competent” in the areas and activities being inspected.

## **Planning for the inspection**

### **Schedules**

The formal annual inspection schedule for ESSL is spread throughout the academic year in order to smooth the workload and help achieve optimum attendance by the participants. This will also help improve the flow of communication between School and Faculty Health and Safety Committees. The schedule indicates the allocated month/s for each School with the exact dates decided by the respective Head of School.

### **Inspection ‘Aide-mémoire’**

The inspection aide-mémoire – [see aide memoire](#) provided is intended to be used as a **guide** for **all** types of inspection (annual formal and local in house) and it should be used flexibly. For the annual formal inspection it is quite acceptable and sometimes preferable to split the inspection of large Schools / buildings either by location or department over short blocks of time rather than full days.

It may be appropriate to give more focus and concentrate on certain specific topic areas for the annual inspection and follow up with additional local inspections. This should be agreed in consultation with the HSM prior to the annual inspection.

**Central Teaching Space** - the responsibility for carrying out regular health and safety checks in central teaching space rests with Estates Services.

### **Preparation**

One month prior (or earlier if possible) to the month of inspection the Head of School should decide on exact dates, times, venues and agree the scope and depth in conjunction with the HSM.

Invites should be sent to the Health and Safety Manager, the School Health and Safety Co-ordinator, Trade Union Representatives, and any relevant specialist advisors. A copy of the previous years’ inspection report, reviewed action plan and aide-mémoire should be provided to the invitees.

Where there is no locally appointed trade union representative available the invitation should be sent to each of the 3 campus unions so they have the opportunity to nominate a representative; [see union contact list for details](#).

Prior to the day of inspection revisit the previous report and action plan to check issues are resolved and completed. Identify any actions to be carried forward.

## **Undertaking the Inspection**

Agree who will take detailed notes this may often be the Safety Co-ordinator.

The Head of School should lead the inspection with all participants actively encouraged to play a full role.

Use the inspection aide-mémoire as a prompt; examine the environment, look at activities & behaviours, talk to staff / students and examine paperwork etc. Sometimes a sampling approach may be more useful than checking everything in finite detail. Recording findings room by room can be helpful; some Schools already do this.

It is essential that people carrying out the inspection do not in any way put themselves or anyone else at risk. Particular care must be taken with regards to safe access to restricted areas and the wearing of appropriate PPE.

If any significant risks are identified, immediate action should be taken by the Head of School to reduce the risk, in extreme cases this may involve stopping the process or activity.

## **Reports and follow up**

The Health and Safety Manager will produce a summary report and action plan with timescales; to be agreed with the Head of School (in the absence of the HSM the Head of School will produce these documents). Copies should be sent to all participants and the Dean of Faculty.

The report should include not only details of what needs improvement but also examples of good practice and effective compliance. It should aim to identify underlying causes of unsatisfactory conditions, and not merely be a list of defects.

The Head of School is responsible for ensuring all necessary actions are taken in line with the agreed timescales and for reporting key findings back to School and Faculty health and Safety Committees.

The outcome of the inspection should be a prioritised “risk based” action plan with recommendations to address the findings. [See action plan template](#)

The action plan should be formally reviewed and updated by the Head of School within 6 months of the date of inspection.

## **In-house local inspections**

The formal annual inspection may need supplementing with additional “**in house local inspections**” this may vary School by School or department by department e.g. laboratories may need more frequent inspections or specific inspections to address particular topics or areas of risk e.g. fire, chemical management

Each School should determine the necessity, format and arrangements for this type of inspection in conjunction with the HSM. The level of risk, findings of previous inspections should be taken into account when determining the frequency and format.

As a minimum over a 12 month period the full scope of the Schools’ activities and locations should be subject to an inspection (either in house or formal annual inspection).

## **Other monitoring activities**

### **Trade Union Inspections**

Trade Union Representatives are entitled to carry out their own independent health and safety inspections of the workplace. However if they receive adequate notice and can attend the formal annual inspection this will often satisfy their requirements.

### **Audits**

Audits are generally carried out independently by members of the Health and Safety Services team and sometimes external organisations. An audit is a structured process of collecting information on the effectiveness and reliability of the health and safety management system as a whole and drawing up plans for corrective actions. They can be very broad in scope or subject specific.

### **Spot checks**

Spot checks are unannounced health and safety checks carried out periodically and are designed to demonstrate continued commitment to health and safety and visible leadership from VCEG members. They allow VCEG members to take an interest in operational areas and encourage staff members to give feedback. A copy of the protocol is available on request from the HSM.

### **Annual Review – Questionnaire**

Each July an audit review (essentially a desk top exercise) will be completed by the HSM and the Head of Sport / Senior Management; outcomes are reported to the University Health and Safety Committee. The information in this questionnaire, along with audit data, is then used to measure University performance against the four centrally agreed Key Performance Indicators (risk control, surveying, competence and leadership).