

Briefing note: Managing suspected or confirmed mould issues in University buildings

1. Purpose

This guidance outlines the steps required when suspected or confirmed mould is identified in University buildings. It provides clarity for facility, school and staff managers on required actions, communication, risk assessment, and specialist remediation.

2. Key principles

- Any mould or damp issues must be reported to the Maintenance Help Desk so that the investigation and remediation process can be initiated, including the procurement of specialist contractors where necessary.

<https://uob.sharepoint.com/sites/campus-division/SitePages/maintenance-services-team.aspx>

- The underlying cause must be identified and resolved, otherwise the issue will recur.
- Prompt action reduces the likelihood of wider spread and minimises health concerns.
- Managers must ensure appropriate communication, coordination, and risk assessment with affected staff and students.
- Specialist contractors should be used for treatment unless trained and properly equipped University staff are available. These contractors must be procured and managed through Campus Division.

3. Required actions

3.1 Identify the underlying cause

Damp and mould issues must be reported to the Maintenance Help Desk as a thorough investigation is required to determine why damp and mould has appeared. Common causes may include water ingress, poor ventilation, or leaks. The cause must be addressed before or alongside treatment, or the problem will return.

3.2 Coordination and communication

Managers of affected staff and student coordinators must be informed promptly. They will need to

- Communicate the issue and planned actions.
- Ensure relevant risk assessments for use of spaces are completed or updated. This should be informed by information about the underlying causes and actions to address these (3.1) and the nature of the actual issue (3.3).
- Implement necessary control measures such as temporary office reconfiguration, staff relocation, individual risk assessments for individuals at increased risk, and monitoring of staff concerns.

3.3 Confirming the issue (if required)

In some cases, it may be helpful to confirm whether the problem is definitely mould or an early-stage condition that may develop into mould. Sampling can support this and the risk assessment. Campus

Division can engage their specialist contractor, IAQ Services, for sampling as part of the investigation and remediation process once an issue is notified to the Maintenance Help desk.

3.4 Treatment and remediation

Mould should be treated as soon as possible to prevent the spread of spores through the building. Treatment must be undertaken by a competent contractor using appropriate disinfectants, PPE, and trained staff.

Treatment process will need to follow a standard operating procedure after a suitable risk assessment (or Risk Assessment and Method Statement, RAMS) has been undertaken. This will require a coordinated approach involving Campus Division, the specialist contractor and local managers of staff to ensure that it considers

- health and physical hazards (infection, allergen, chemical, work at height, manual handling etc.)
- pre-existing health conditions or vulnerabilities that may be adversely affected by mould
- training
- equipment requirements
- effective disinfectants and post-treatment cleaning
- PPE requirements
- waste handling

A specialist contractor to undertake treatment is recommended unless this capability is established. Complex cases should always be handled by specialists.

4. Managing staff and students during an incident

4.1 Health considerations

Health effects vary depending on the type and extent of mould and an individual's health status. For a healthy individual, symptoms may resemble allergic reactions or cold-like symptoms with increasing severity for anyone with pre-existing health conditions such as respiratory-related conditions or diseases, allergies and a compromised immune system. Staff experiencing symptoms should consult their GP.

4.2 Restricting access

Access to affected areas should be restricted until treatment is complete. Staff should not touch or disturb the mould, as this may help spread spores.

4.3 Ongoing management

Managers must monitor the situation, respond to staff concerns, ensure risk assessments are completed, and update individual risk assessments where vulnerable individuals may be affected.

5. Summary of responsibilities

Managers / coordinators

- Report damp and mould issues to the Maintenance Help Desk.
- Communicate with each other, and with staff and students regarding actions.

- Implement risk assessments for managing the use of and access to affected areas.
- Monitor health concerns and carry out individual risk assessments if required.
- Coordinate and cooperate with Campus Division and their specialist contractors and provide information to inform RAMS for the treatment and remediation process.

Contractors and Campus Division

- Conduct safe, competent treatment using RAMS and coordinate with local managers regarding investigation, treatment and remediation.
- Use appropriate equipment, PPE, and disinfectants for treatment.
- Minimise spread of spores during remedial works.