



ES CoP001 Safe use of electrical equipment

The University Court is responsible for determining the Policy to be adopted for implementing legislation on the use of electricity at work. The responsibility derives from the Health and Safety at Work, etc., Act, 1974. It is the duty of all Heads of Schools to ensure that all aspects of the Court's Health and Safety Policy are complied with, within their area of responsibility.

Each Head of School must take appropriate measures to ensure that all electrical equipment is safe and suitable for the purpose intended. All relevant persons should be made aware of the associated hazards and of the requirements to adopt working procedures designed to keep the risks to their health, and to the health of other persons, as low as reasonably achievable.

The University Health and Safety Policy on the safe use of electrical equipment must be supplemented by local school (area) rules relating to the specific activities of the school (area), so that when read in conjunction with this part of the Policy, the two documents form an effective means of securing the safe use of electrical equipment. Where appropriate, written records of action taken should be maintained. Computerised record keeping is equally acceptable.

001.1 Electrical supplies and equipment

The Estates and Buildings Works Division is responsible for the provision of safe electrical supplies within the fabric of University buildings up to and including the outlet sockets. Beyond the electrical outlet, each school is responsible for any further distribution of the supply and for all equipment connected thereto, unless the equipment is initially supplied and connected by Works Division. A supplementary convector heater would be one such example. Connections to the three-phase supply should only be carried out by Works Division Engineers or by an appointed contractor. Written records should be maintained of all such work.

If any person has concerns about the safety of connections to the electrical supply, Works Division Electrical Engineers will give advice. Flexible leads should not be clipped to walls to form quasi-permanent extensions to the electrical installation. Where schools wish to extend the fixed wiring system within a University building, this must be done by, or in consultation with, Works Division Engineers.

If any doubt exists about the safety of a piece of electrical equipment, it must be taken out of service immediately and labelled 'Not for Use'. It should be removed immediately from the area concerned and repaired, or disposed of safely. A report must be made to a responsible person, such as a laboratory superintendent, chief technician or school safety adviser, who must then take appropriate action.



001.2 Competent persons

Persons carrying out the testing and/or repair of electrical equipment, or carrying out experimental work on electrical equipment or its associated connections must have appropriate technical knowledge, training and information to enable them to work safely. Persons who are not thus qualified may work with electrical equipment provided suitable and sufficient supervision by a competent person is provided.

General guidelines for competence are set out below:

1. Practical experience in working with electricity and an adequate knowledge of hazards.
2. A knowledge of current safety standards and a clear understanding of the precautions required to avoid danger.
3. The ability to recognise whether it is safe for work to continue, particularly in respect of unfamiliar equipment and unfamiliar locations.

It is recognised that many persons will have acquired a basic competence in connecting plugs, selecting fuses and noting faults in plugs and cables, without specific training which can be readily identified. This basic competence will be sufficient, in general, for such individuals to carry out the inspection of portable electrical equipment.

It is for the Head of School to decide whether a particular individual is competent to carry out work with electrical equipment, on the basis of assessment of the task, the experience of the individual and the particular job.