

Safe Use of Electrical Appliances Policy

Lead Officer (Post):	Vice Principal Operations
Responsible Office/Department:	Facilities
Responsible Committee:	Operations and Estates, Health and Safety
Review Officer (Post):	Campus Services and Facilities Manager
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Accessible versions of this policy are available upon request.

Policy Summary

Overview	Sets out UHI Shetland's approach on the safe use, inspection, and maintenance of electrical equipment at its premises.
Purpose	To reduce the risk of electrical incidents, including injury, fire, and equipment failure, through safe use, inspection, and risk-based maintenance of electrical appliances.
Scope	Applies to all staff, students, and contractors using electrical equipment on UHI Shetland premises, including portable and privately owned equipment where authorised.
Consultation	Operations and Estates, Health and Safety Committee

Implementation and Monitoring	Implemented through established safety procedures, inspection regimes, and staff guidance, with oversight by the Vice Principal (Operations) and Campus Services and Facilities Manager.
Risk Implications	Failure to comply may result in electrical injury or death, fire, damage to property, financial loss, and potential legal or reputational consequences.
Link with Strategy	Supports UHI Shetland's Vision by maintaining safe, high-quality environments for learning and work. Reflects UHI Shetland's Values by: • Working together – promoting shared responsibility for electrical safety • Working for Shetland – protecting staff, students, and community users • Working sustainably – maintaining equipment effectively to extend its lifecycle • Working to become resilient – reducing risk and ensuring continuity of operations • Working with partners – complying with regulatory standards and good practice guidance

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 All electrical equipment needs to be checked for safety before use, and periodically during its working life.
- 1.2 All staff are responsible for using equipment on college premises safely and appropriately.

2. Definitions

2.1 Portable electrical equipment means electrical equipment that is **not part of the fixed electrical installation** and is connected to the electricity supply by a **flexible lead and plug**, or similar connection, and which is **normally moved, can easily be moved, or could be moved from place to place** while connected or between uses. This includes items such as kettles, heaters, fans, desk lamps, vacuum cleaners, photocopiers and desktop computers.

2.2 PAT testing

PAT testing is the examination of portable electrical equipment to confirm that it remains safe for continued use. This process may include user checks, formal visual inspections and, where required, electrical tests carried out by a competent person using suitable equipment. PAT testing is part of a wider risk-based maintenance regime and is not, in itself, a legal requirement at fixed annual intervals.

3. Purpose

3.1 Use of equipment

It is the responsibility of the user of the equipment to visually inspect it before use, and to inform the Facilities Technician of any abnormalities or faults immediately.

Staff purchasing electrical equipment are responsible for ensuring that advice is sought prior to purchase and that equipment is visually inspected/tested as appropriate and recorded on the asset register.

Staff using privately owned electrical equipment, within the College, should ensure that each item is inspected and tested by maintenance staff for electrical safety prior to use.

Privately owned electrical equipment intended for teaching/work tasks (including demonstrations, practical teaching, productions and events) may

only be used where authorised by the relevant manager and included within the College's electrical equipment maintenance regime. Before first use, it must receive a recorded formal visual inspection and, where risk assessment indicates, combined inspection and testing (PAT) by a competent person.

Staff and students bringing personal equipment into Port Arthur House must ensure that the item, including the cable, is not mechanically damaged and that the plug is correctly wired and fused. If you are in any doubt about a piece of equipment, do not use it and ask for help from the relevant Facilities Technician.

3.2 Purchasing of electrical equipment

Staff purchasing electrical equipment are responsible for ensuring that:

Advice is sought from a Facilities Technician or ICT staff, prior to purchase of the equipment, to ensure that the equipment meets the appropriate standards for its use and function.

The equipment is inspected by a Facilities Technician and issued with and Test and Inspection sticker so that each item is checked for safety and recorded on the asset register.

New equipment with the CE, UKCA or BS mark only requires a visual inspection before use, second hand equipment should receive a full test and inspection.

3.3 In-service inspection and testing of electrical equipment

UHI Shetland takes a risk-based approach to electrical equipment testing.

The Campus Services and Facilities Manager and Facilities Technicians will schedule inspection and testing of electrical equipment based on risk, considering the type of equipment, how and where it is used, manufacturer guidance and previous fault history. Inspection and testing intervals will be

reviewed periodically and adjusted where fault rates indicate increased or reduced risk.

Facilities Technicians should conduct inspections and tests of equipment at specified intervals, recording the results accordingly.

3.4 Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and maintenance of portable electrical equipment

The organisation will maintain electrical equipment in a safe condition in line with the **Electricity at Work Regulations 1989**. The law does **not** state that all portable appliances must be tested annually.

The frequency of inspection and testing will be determined by **risk**, taking account of the **type of equipment, how often it is used**, and the **environment** in which it is used.

PAT is the examination of electrical appliances and equipment to ensure they are safe to use. The law requires electrical equipment to be maintained to prevent danger; it does not prescribe that PAT is compulsory, nor does it specify how often testing must be done. The college will therefore apply a proportionate, risk-based approach.

In low-risk environments such as offices, many faults can be identified through **user checks and visual inspection**, and HSE says it is a myth that all appliances need annual PAT testing.

Where electrical testing is required, it must be carried out by a **competent person** with the right knowledge, equipment and ability to interpret results.

Scope: Portable, movable or transportable electrical equipment and associated leads/extension leads used for University activities, including privately owned equipment used for teaching/work tasks where permitted.

Maintenance regime: (1) User checks before use; (2) recorded formal visual inspection at appropriate intervals; (3) combined inspection and testing (PAT) where risk matrix indicates.

Frequency: Determined by risk matrix (equipment class, environment, frequency of movement/use and likelihood of damage) and reviewed based on findings. Annual PAT of all equipment is not automatically required in low-risk environments. **See Appendix A for risk assessment matrix and UHI Shetland PAT testing information.**

Competence: User checks by users. Formal visual inspections may be carried out by a competent person with suitable information/instruction. Combined inspection and testing (PAT) must be undertaken by a competent person with the right equipment and ability to interpret results.

Records/labels: Not legally required but used as a management tool to monitor and review the scheme and demonstrate it exists.

Failure/quarantine: Items failing checks/tests must be removed from use immediately, labelled “Do Not Use”, and repaired only by a competent person or disposed of appropriately.

3.5 Fuses

Fuses are intended to protect equipment against current overload. Other measures are necessary to protect against electric shock (see Residual Current Devices).

The fuse must be of the correct rating, which is usually the lowest rating that will carry the appliance current continuously. The reason for a fuse blowing, or a circuit breaker tripping, must always be investigated by a competent person and replacement fuses must always be of the correct rating.

3.6 Residual Current Devices (RCDs)

As a rule, an RCD will prevent a person from being subjected to a lethal shock from a fault current to earth by limiting the magnitude and the duration of the shock. However, under certain fault conditions it is still possible to receive a lethal shock with a correctly functioning RCD in the circuit.

Under no circumstances is an RCD to be used as a substitute for poor working practices, to protect against defective equipment or equipment use in an unsuitable environment (e.g. wet)

Every RCD unit is fitted with a test button which should be operated regularly to prove breaker operation.

3.7 Adaptors and Extension Sockets

Multi-port “brick” type adaptors, (2 or 3 way which plug directly into a socket) must not be used under any circumstances. Any found on the Campus should be handed to Facilities Technicians for disposal.

Extension sockets or plug strips must:

- Be British Standard Institute (BSI) approved;
- Individually fused;
- Preferably incorporate an indicating neon light and isolator;
- For sensitive computer equipment and similar, consideration should be given to using extension sockets or plug strips incorporating anti-surge filters.
- Only one extension socket or plug strip is to be plugged into a wall socket at a time.
- Never use a lighting socket to power electrical equipment.

3.8 Cables and Extension Cables

Care should be taken when placing cables so as they do not present a trip hazard. If there is no alternative to taking cables across a floor, then they should be protected with a suitable cable guard.

Wherever possible, trailing cables should be secured using appropriate ties, to achieve good housekeeping standards. Rubber and plastic covered cables should be kept well away from hot surfaces.

Never use a coiled extension cable without first fully unreeling the cable. The heat generated in a coiled cable carrying power can lead to the insulation melting.

No heavy load items (heaters, kettles, hairdryers, anything above 10A) should be plugged into an extension cable, unless the extension has been specifically made for the asset (single outlet only, suitably sized cable, inspected and tested).

Extension leads should not be daisy-chained (where one extension lead is plugged into another one) as this increases the dangers of overloading and fire. In situations where there is inadequate provision, consideration should be given to the installation of additional sockets.

3.9 Safeguards Against Fire

Fires can be caused by overloaded or defective electrical circuits but, if equipment is wired properly, with the cable adequately rated and the fusing is correct, the risk is slight. However, explosions and fire can result from sparking contact in the presence of highly flammable gases and vapours, and specially designed flameproof and explosion proof electrical equipment, allied to adequate and proper ventilation, must be used in areas where these risks are present. (See Refrigerators and Freezers below).

Always switch off equipment with the proper switch and never by pulling out the plug. Equipment that is not being used or is left unattended should be switched off and unplugged, particularly in unoccupied rooms. Where it is necessary to leave equipment operating unattended, the controlling switch must be clearly identified by an appropriate notice. Where possible, additional safety features should be incorporated.

Fan heaters and bar fires are prohibited on campus due to their high risk of starting fires if left unattended or accidentally left on at night.

3.10 Wet Lead Acid Batteries

If car batteries, or equivalent accumulators, are used as low voltage supplies, the terminals and connections must be protected to avoid the danger of short circuit, and hence burns, arising from conductors which accidentally fall on to the batteries. Do not wear metal watch straps or jewellery when working with battery supplies. Conventional car batteries and accumulators should be charged only in well-ventilated areas free of ignition sources, since hydrogen can be produced, and the dangers from battery acid should also be noted.

Crocodile type connections should not be used as they leave the terminals exposed and generate spark which could cause a battery explosion. Clamp type connections with insulating covers should be used instead.

Car batteries should be disposed of carefully, in accordance with the local authority regulations on disposal.

3.11 Static Electricity

The electric shock that can sometimes be experienced by touching a metal door handle after walking across a synthetic carpet is due to static electricity. Maintenance staff should observe anti-static precautions when maintaining electronics equipment.

A similar electric charge could ignite a flammable vapour, therefore static build-up should be taken into when transporting and using flammable liquids and gases and therefore, suitable anti-static precautions should be observed.

3.12 Refrigerators and Freezers

The electrical systems of domestic refrigerators and freezers present a fire and explosion hazard if they are used for the storage of flammable solvents. Escape of flammable vapour from stored materials can be ignited by the operation of internal light switches, thermostat contacts and door seal heaters.

4. Scope

All staff at UHI Shetland, including postgraduate students and researchers. This also applies to contractors who are working on UHI Shetland premises.

5. Exceptions

There are no exceptions to this policy

6. Notification

This policy and attached appendix will be readily available on the Staff Resources page.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 SMT (Vice Principal Operations)

Oversight of the strategic and operational governance for safe electrical equipment across the campus.

Monitors compliance through planned review, audits and performance reporting.

7.2 Campus Services and Facilities Manager

Maintains (or oversees) an equipment register and schedules inspection/testing based on risk.

Ensures defects are acted on promptly and unsafe equipment is removed from use.

7.3 Senior ICT Technician

Ensures ICT equipment is included in the risk-based maintenance regime (user checks, visual inspection and PAT as applicable).

Ensures ICT repairs, replacements and configurations do not introduce electrical safety risks.

7.4 Facilities Technicians

Carries out (or supports) formal visual inspections and PAT testing where competent and authorised.

Labels equipment and records test/inspection outcomes and remedial actions.

Removes damaged or unsafe equipment from service and escalates urgent risks immediately.

7.5 Line Managers

Ensure staff follow local arrangements for safe use and checks of electrical equipment.

Ensure equipment in their area is suitable, used correctly and presented for inspection/testing when due.

Ensure faults are reported promptly and defective items are taken out of use.

7.6 All Staff

Carry out simple user checks before use and stop using equipment that appears unsafe.

Report damage, overheating, loose parts, or faulty leads/plugs immediately.

Do not use personal electrical equipment at work unless it is authorised and included in local controls.

8. Legislative Framework

- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

9. Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines, and Other Resources

HSE guidance referenced: INDG236 (Maintaining portable electric equipment in low-risk environments); HSG107 (Maintaining portable electrical equipment); HSE PAT FAQs.

10. Version Control and Change History

Version	Date	Approved by	Amendment(s)	Author
0	09/11/23	Operations and Estates		Facilities Manager
1	19/06/26	Operations and Estates	Reformatted	Vice Principal Operations