

# Office Safety Policy

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## Contents

1. Introduction .....	4
2. Aim and Scope of Policy .....	4
3. Roles and Responsibilities .....	4
3.1 Deans and Directors .....	4
3.2. Line Managers .....	5
3.3 All staff .....	5
3.4 Contractors and Visitors .....	5
4. Assessing the risks .....	5
4.1. Expectant and New Mothers .....	5
4.2. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEPs ) and Generic Emergency Evacuation Plan (GEEPs) .....	6
5. General Housekeeping.....	6
5.1. Cleanliness and Waste.....	7
5.2. Storage.....	7
6. Welfare Facilities .....	9
6.1 Drinking water .....	9
6.2 Kitchens in Offices.....	9
6.3 Sanitary conveniences .....	9
6.4 Washing facilities .....	9
6.5 First Aid Arrangements .....	10
7. Building Environment .....	10
7.1 Ventilation and Temperature .....	10
7.2 Space .....	10
7.3. Lighting .....	11
7.4. Electrical.....	11
7.5. Noise .....	12
7.6. Workstations and Seating .....	13
8. Staff Inductions .....	13
9. Manual Handling .....	13
10. Office Equipment/Machinery .....	14
11. Lone Working .....	14

12. Open Plan Office Etiquette .....	14
13. Estates Office moves .....	15
13.1 Moves process .....	15
14. Reporting.....	16
14.1 Maintenance.....	16
14.2 Incidents and Accidents .....	16

## 1. Introduction

London Metropolitan University (London Met) wishes to ensure that all office and workplace environments within its operations are both managed and used in a manner that is conducive to the safety of all London Met employees and other parties who may have cause to work in their offices, for whatever reason.

There are several regulations relating to the office environment. In general, an office, as is any work environment, is covered by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Furthermore, specific detail is contained in the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, which specify standards for the general office environment, including issues such as temperature, seating, space, and lighting levels.

Other legislations applicable to offices:

- First Aid at Work Regulations 1981
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992 (amended 2002)
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

## 2. Aim and Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all employees of London Met including partner agencies, visitors, contractors, agency and sub-contracted staff working in London Met offices. Managers at all levels are expected to take an active lead to ensure that Health and Safety in their areas of responsibilities are of the highest standard and integral to the operation of the organisation.

This includes a specific reference to:

- 1. General housekeeping and maintenance of building and department work areas.**
- 2. Reporting building and infrastructure defects.**
- 3. Regular inspection and monitoring of work areas.**

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

### 3.1 Deans and Directors

Deans and Directors (Academic Schools or Professional Services Directorates) are responsible for implementing relevant sections of this policy, for cooperating with Estates, where required, and for ensuring that concerns are reported appropriately and acted upon. It is the responsibility of the Deans and Directors to ensure that there is a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for all work activities in their area of

responsibility.

If an office is shared by members of several teams, the same principles outlined in this policy, apply. Deans and Directors may delegate their responsibilities to implement this policy to the relevant Heads of the Teams.

### **3.2. Line Managers**

Line managers are responsible for inducting new members of staff, ensuring information about risk, hazards and controls, as well as relevant procedures are known.

### **3.3 All staff**

All University staff are required to comply with the requirements of the University's Policy and Procedures and have a statutory duty to safeguard their own and others' health and safety. Staff should report immediately to their line manager or other University manager as appropriate, any perceived health and safety hazards and seek advice and guidance on any matters of which they have doubts or concerns.

### **3.4 Contractors and Visitors**

Contractors and Visitors must report to reception where they should be made aware of any local safety procedures by their London Met contact representative. They are required to follow London Met staff instruction in case of emergency and report all hazards, accidents and dangerous occurrences to a member of University staff, whether persons are injured or not. They have a responsibility to leave the site clean and safe.

If contractors or visitors are seen acting unsafely this should be reported as a near miss via the [Incident Report Form](#) on the Health and safety web pages.

**For urgent reports, Security or Reception teams must be contacted. They will escalate it appropriately.**

## **4. Assessing the risks**

Each School and Department should have a risk assessment for office work, which includes all relevant risks identified in a hazard register, such as DSE, lone working, stress, etc.

Each employee, working for at least 1 h with a screen equipment on an average working day is required to undertake a DSE assessment of their workstation:

<https://staff.londonmet.ac.uk/employment-support/health-and-wellbeing/health-and-safety/working-with-computers-and-other-display-screen-equipment-dse/>

### **4.1. Expectant and New Mothers**

London Met accepts its responsibilities as set out within the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations to protect new, expectant and breastfeeding mothers. Line managers are responsible for completing an [Expectant & New Mothers risk assessment](#) to ensure that the employee and the unborn child are not exposed to any significant risk. Suitable facilities for nursing mothers to rest and express milk are

provided in the first aid rooms located across campuses.

#### **4.2. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEPs ) and Generic Emergency Evacuation Plan (GEEPs)**

Under the **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**, the university has a legal duty to ensure the safety of all individuals, including those with physical, sensory, or cognitive impairments. Key responsibilities include:

##### **Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)**

The university creates PEEPs for both students and staff who may require assistance during an evacuation. A PEEP outlines:

- How the individual will be alerted
- What assistance is required
- Who will provide that assistance
- Safe evacuation routes or refuge points

##### **Generic Emergency Evacuation Plans (GEEPs)**

GEEPs outline how individuals who do not require personalised support but may still be at increased risk (such as visitors, temporary staff, or those unfamiliar with the building), will be safely evacuated during an emergency.

Visitors must report to reception on arrival and must be accompanied by their host during any evacuation.

##### **A GEEP typically includes:**

- **Evacuation procedures for specific areas**
- **Provisions for people with impairments**, including:
  - Use of refuge points
  - Availability of evacuation chairs
  - Signage and alarms (e.g. visual alarms)
- **Communication methods**, such as:
  - How fire alarms and instructions will be communicated (audible and visual)

## **5. General Housekeeping**

Poor housekeeping is a common cause of accidents especially slips, trips, falls and fires in the workplace. In order to ensure that satisfactory standards of housekeeping are achieved the following arrangements are to be adhered to by all employees:

1. Visually inspect workplace at the beginning and end of each day and keep it tidy. Defects such as broken chairs, faulty drawers, trailing cables etc. should be clearly mark with “Do not use” sign, removed out of use and reported immediately to [ask@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ask@londonmet.ac.uk)
2. Routinely inspect chairs for condition, do not use chairs for climbing – a stepping stool or step ladder only should be used.
3. Trailing leads will be avoided wherever possible or otherwise ramped or protected to avoid potential tripping hazards.

Do not allow objects to protrude into walkways.

Ensure that waste materials are properly stored and are removed on a regular basis, this includes the removal of unusual or extra-large items. Contact [ask@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ask@londonmet.ac.uk) for advice.

Do not store office equipment anywhere other than in designated areas.

The bottom drawers of filing cabinets should be filled first and, in the absence of safety devices to prevent it toppling, only one drawer at a time should be opened

## **5.1. Cleanliness and Waste**

All workplace furniture, furnishings and fittings supplied need to be kept sufficiently clean. Surfaces of the floors, walls and ceilings of all workplaces inside buildings should be capable of being kept sufficiently clean (*Sufficiently clean means that workplaces should be regularly cleaned to ensure that dirt or refuse is not allowed to accumulate, and spillages and deposits are removed or cleaned up as soon as possible. Submit a request to [ask@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ask@londonmet.ac.uk) if cleaning is required.*)

Waste materials, especially food waste, must not be allowed to accumulate in workplace except in suitable storage containers.

The frequency and standard of cleanliness will depend on the nature of the business and London Met has appointed a suitable facility supplier to carry out a regular and sufficient cleaning service.

## **5.2. Storage**

Storage system design should focus on the nature of the items to be stored and the capabilities and limitations of the people required to use the system.

Storage facilities such as filing cabinets, lockers and shelves can sometimes be positioned on the border of a walkway. When choosing the location of this equipment it is important to consider what other activities occur in the area. (i.e.) a filing cabinet requires approximately 1.2 metres of space in front of it to enable someone to access a fully opened bottom drawer. If this projects into a frequently used walkway it becomes an obstruction and a hazard will be created.

### **5.2.1. Shelving systems**

Users need to have clear access to shelving systems and the items stored on them. To achieve the required level of access, redesign or the provision of additional equipment will sometimes be required. For example, large shelving systems often have a top level of shelving that is above head height, or shelves may be too deep, requiring staff to bend and reach in. Redesign of the shelving and relocation of items between knuckle and shoulder height should be considered. If this is not practicable, some of the following controls should be considered:

- A safe means of climbing up to the required level.
- An intermediate support point to enable lifting or lowering in stages as users step to higher levels.

Climbing shelves to access higher shelves is an unsafe practice and is a risk that requires control. Options for control of this risk may include providing mobile steps or small platforms on rollers (as often found in libraries), small sets of step ladders, platform ladders and rolling ladders. Steps should be stable, and platforms and handrails are required where the work includes access to high storage.

The law does not identify a maximum weight limit. It places duties on employers to manage or control risk; measures to take to meet this duty will vary depending on the circumstances of the task. Consult with H&S team before installing new storage shelving or racking. Things to be considered will include the individual carrying out the handling operation, (i.e.) strength, fitness, underlying medical conditions, the weight to be lifted and distance to be carried, the nature of the load or the postures to be adopted or the availability of equipment to facilitate the lift. Consult with Estates and/or H&S team before installing new storage shelving or racking.

Where a maximum loading capacity is not known a common-sense approach is required.

- Light weight: ornaments, plants, small number of lightweight files or books
- Medium weight: journals, A4 files, books
- Heavy weight: boxes, box files, heavy or bulky equipment

### **5.2.2 General principles of storage areas**

- Large or heavy items should be stored at easily accessible heights to minimise the demands of handling.
- Frequently handled items should be placed within easy reach.
- Items carried on a trolley should remain on the trolley while in storage.
- Smaller, lightweight and infrequently handled items may be stored in the lower or higher areas of a storage system.
- It should be easy to place items into the storage unit and take them out.
- The storage system should accommodate the size and shape of the item being stored. (i.e.) dividers will secure files stored in shelving and improve access to them. Documents or small publications may be stored in suspension files or folders, making them easier to handle.



## **6. Welfare Facilities**

Welfare facilities include the provision of adequate toilet and washing facilities. The University will ensure these facilities will be sufficient in number, be clean, well maintained and have adequate ventilation. Hot and cold water, soap and hand drying facilities will also be in place.

### **6.1 Drinking water**

An adequate supply of wholesome/potable drinking water shall be provided for all persons at work in the workplace. London Met provides drinking water in kitchen areas and [drinking fountains](#) located near offices across the campuses. Every supply of drinking water needs to be marked by an appropriate sign where necessary for reasons of health and safety.

### **6.2 Kitchens in Offices**

Basic rules of kitchen safety should be observed to prevent serious injuries or accidents always pay attention to what you're doing

1. Do not turn on electrical items and then leave them unattended.
2. Switch off all equipment at the end of the day.
3. University discourages bringing your own kitchen equipment, however if this already in place, it must be reported to [ask@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ask@londonmet.ac.uk) for electrical testing. Due to abundance of fire incidents involving toasters, University discourages bringing toasters and other cooking equipment to London Met premises. If upon H&S inspection a toaster (or any other kitchen equipment) is found unsafe, it will be removed for disposal.
4. Out of date food is removed from fridges, and fridges and microwaves are cleaned weekly by soft services team. Please report to [ask@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ask@londonmet.ac.uk) if this is not happening in your area.

### **6.3 Sanitary conveniences**

Suitable and sufficient sanitary conveniences should be provided at readily accessible places. Sanitary conveniences are not suitable unless:

- The rooms containing them are adequately ventilated and lit.
- They and the rooms containing them are kept in a clean and orderly condition.
- Separate rooms containing conveniences are provided for men and women except where and so far as each convenience is in a separate room and the door of which is capable of being secured from inside.

### **6.4 Washing facilities**

Suitable and sufficient washing facilities, including showers if required by the nature of the work or for health reasons, shall be provided at readily accessible places.

The University provides an adequate number of toilet facilities and washing facilities to allow everyone at work to use them without unreasonable delay and provision must

be made for any workers with a disability to enable them to have access to facilities which are adjusted for their use if necessary.  
In toilets used by women, suitable means for the disposal of sanitary dressings are provided.

Man-made water systems are a potential source for legionella bacteria growth, and risks from legionella in such systems should be appropriately assessed and managed. Further advice can be found on the Health and Safety policy page [Legionella Policy](#).

## **6.5 First Aid Arrangements**

London Met is under a general duty to provide a safe place of work, with suitable arrangements for welfare. The University must ensure that there is adequate first aid provision for employees who may become ill or are injured at work. The University will consider the nature of activities at the workplace when determining the number and types of first aiders to appoint and carry out a first aid needs assessment which forms the basis of the first aid policy.

Further advice and guidance can be found on the Health and Safety policy guidance page [First Aid Policy](#).

## **7. Building Environment**

### **7.1 Ventilation and Temperature**

Ventilation refers to the rate of exchange of air in a specified area of a building. This is usually expressed in the number of air changes in a given time. Many office buildings use recirculating air systems to provide ventilation.

Suitable air filtering systems are required to ensure the quality level of the re-circulated air. The purpose of ventilation is to provide occupants with an acceptable quality of inhaled air, and to remove or dilute airborne contamination. Ventilation should not be confused with air conditioning, which is designed to provide air at the temperature and humidity required for thermal comfort.

The temperature in work areas should normally be at least 16°C unless much of the work involves severe physical effort in which case the temperature should be at least 13°C. The Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers recommends the following temperature of 19°C - 21°C in an office environment.

Ventilation maintenance concerns must be reported to the Estates help desk via [ask@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ask@londonmet.ac.uk).

### **7.2 Space**

Workrooms should have enough free space to allow people to get to and from workstations and to move within the room, with ease. The number of people who may work in any particular room at any one time will depend not only on the size of the room, but on the space taken up by furniture, fittings, equipment, and on the layout of the room.

In older buildings with obstructions such as low beams the obstruction should be clearly marked. The total volume of the room, when empty, divided by the number of people normally working in it should be at least 11 cubic metres. The figure of 11 cubic metres per person is a minimum and may be insufficient if, for example, much of the room is taken up by furniture etc. Where space is limited careful planning and design of the workplace is particularly important.

### **7.3. Lighting**

The quality of light is important, and a mixture of good natural light and artificial systems is the best method of providing the correct lighting level. It is also important that the direction of natural light can be controlled to ensure an absence of reflections on the monitor screens, this is covered in the DSE assessment.

Suitable and sufficient emergency lighting shall be provided in any room in circumstances in which persons at work are specially exposed to danger in the event of failure of artificial lighting. Emergency lighting provides illumination to ensure safe evacuation from a building.

### **7.4. Electrical**

Electrical accidents can have very serious consequences. To help prevent them, remember these three basic rules

- Always check electrical equipment visually before use and report faulty or damaged equipment; do not attempt to use it.
- Do not try to repair faulty equipment; Leave it to a competent person.
- Never use electrical equipment in damp surroundings unless you know that it is suitable for that purpose.

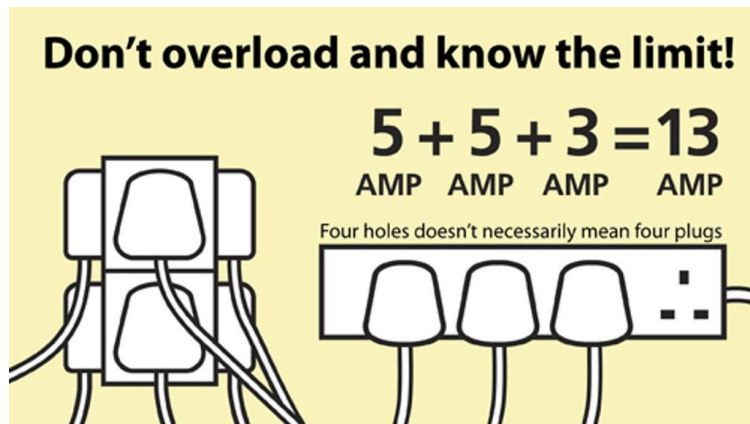
#### **Safe use of extension leads**

The majority of standard extension leads are rated for 13 amps.

Any equipment producing heat or cold (microwave, kettle and fridge) require more power and are often rated at 13 amp each. Office desk equipment is usually rated at 3-5 amp. Therefore, while it is safe to plug a few office desk equipment to a single extension lead, it is only safe to plug in one kitchen appliance.

**Never overload an extension lead.**

If you need more sockets, email [ask@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ask@londonmet.ac.uk) and seek advice from H&S team.



### Visual checks for electrical equipment.

Checks should be undertaken by the user each time the equipment is used and during its use.

The person using the equipment should be encouraged to look critically at the electrical equipment they use and visually check for signs that the equipment is not in good condition, for example:

- Is there damage (apart from light scuffing) to the cable sheath.
- Is the plug damaged, for example the casing is cracked, or the pins are bent.
- Are there inadequate joints, including taped joints in the cable.
- Is the outer sheath of the cable not effectively secured where it enters the plug.
- Obvious evidence would be if the coloured insulation of the internal cable cores were showing.
- Has the equipment been subjected to conditions for which it is not suitable, (i.e.). It is wet or excessively contaminated.
- Is there damage to the external casing of the equipment or there are some loose parts or screws.
- Is there evidence of overheating (burn marks or discoloration).

These checks also apply to extension leads and associated plugs and sockets. All employees are expected to undertake regular visual checks of their workstations and after a workstation move.

Any faults should be reported to the line manager and the equipment taken out of use immediately. Line Managers should take effective steps to ensure that the equipment is not used again until repaired by a person competent to carry out the task, (i.e.). The defective equipment could be labelled as 'faulty' and its associated plug removed). Additional guidance on electrical safety can be found on the [Safety Notices page](#).

### 7.5. Noise

Noise at work is controlled by legislation to prevent harm to hearing. Action levels are prescribed where an employer should instigate protective measures. These action levels would not normally be exceeded in an office environment; however, noise can be a nuisance and a distraction if concentration is required.

Office layouts can prevent unnecessary noise, (i.e.) large photocopiers being placed in their own room. Where noise is a problem it should be reported to your line manager and if necessary, control methods should be considered.

Further advice and guidance can be found on the Health and Safety policy guidance page [Control of Noise at Work Policy](#).

## **7.6. Workstations and Seating**

Every workstation should be arranged so that it is suitable for any person at work in the workplace who is likely to work at that workstation and for any work being undertaken which is likely to be done there. Every workstation should be arranged so far as is reasonably practicable:

- It enables any person at the workstation to leave it swiftly or, as appropriate, to be assisted in the event of an emergency.
- It ensures that any person at the workstation is not likely to slip or fall.
- A suitable seat shall be provided for each person in the workplace whose work includes operations of a kind where the work (or a substantial part of it) can or must be done sitting.

Further advice and guidance can be found on the Health and Safety policy guidance page [Display Screen Equipment Policy](#). Each employee is required to undertake a [DSE assessment form](#) for every workstation they are using for more than 1h a day.

## **8. Staff Inductions**

In order to secure the health and safety of all employees, the university will provide health and safety training to new employees, which will be incorporated into general induction training.

Induction training will commence on the first day of employment so that employees are familiar with basic procedures once they are at their place of work. Where this is not possible, induction training will take place as soon as possible after the employee has started work. The person responsible for this will always be the Line Manager.

[Day One Induction and Post Hire Journey checklist](#) are useful resources to start familiarisation of a new worker with workplace hazards and procedures.

## **9. Manual Handling**

Poor lifting and carrying technique contribute to manual handling related injuries of staff every year. Although there are some members of staff who lift objects daily as part of their employment, nearly all staff will lift some objects during their working week.

Good technique is vital in preventing injury. If the object to be lifted is large, awkward or heavy then assessment should be undertaken. The first part of any assessment should consider whether the object needs to be lifted at all. Engineering methods (i.e.). Lifting appliances, or trolleys etc., should be considered next, if this is not possible a method for manual lifting with the assistance of other staff can be used.

Some tips on efficient lifting:

- Is it necessary to lift the load? If not – don't.
- Assess the load and decide if help is needed.
- Obtain a firm grip on the load (use gloves if necessary).
- Bend at the knees and not from the waist.
- Use your legs not your back to thrust upwards (the leg muscles were designed for power and strength).
- Keep the load near to your body.
- Do not twist your spine when lifting or carrying loads.

Further advice and guidance can be found on the Health and Safety policy guidance page [Manual Handling Policy](#).

## **10. Office Equipment/Machinery**

There are a variety of machines and equipment that are commonly used in an office environment that could cause harm if used incorrectly or are poorly maintained.

Apart from the electrical safety requirements, there are other hazards which could be present. Photocopiers are essential office machines that use electrical, electronic and mechanical parts to work. Unauthorised repairs or servicing from an untrained person could create unnecessary risks and should not be permitted. Maintenance issues should be reported to the helpdesk via [ask@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ask@londonmet.ac.uk).

## **11. Lone Working**

While office work is generally low hazard, there are many factors which may affect your safety during lone working. You may need to implement additional controls to ensure your safety while working alone in the office, especially outside of the normal business hours or in a remote area of the building. See [Lone Working Policy](#) for more information.

## **12. Open Plan Office Etiquette**

Talking too loudly, munching food, tapping pencils, and rustling paper etc. are just some of the things that staff do that can affect our ability to concentrate on our work. Uninvited invasion of space can further affect our ability to work efficiently.

Open plan offices have many benefits, such as bringing about closer working relationships with colleagues from within your own department/team. Additionally, open plan offices can be fun places to work due to increased social interaction giving a feeling of belonging.

The university values all of its employees and the contribution each of them makes to its overall success and it strives to create and maintain a healthy and enjoyable working environment in which open and effective communication, support for each employee and mutual respect between individuals are the expectations and the reality.

The following open plan office etiquette is expected to be adhered to by all staff and in order to achieve this:

- Please respect people's personal space.
- Be aware of noise levels in the office and try and keep conversations, either on the telephone or in person to a reasonable level.
- Do ensure that you cannot be overheard when discussing confidential matters and use designated quiet space where available for confidential conversations.
- Avoid using speaker phones and try to set a low volume telephone ring.
- Be considerate over the use of mobile phones, particularly for incoming calls where you may harbour loud, unusual, or annoying ring tones.
- Shouting across the office to fellow work colleagues is not recommended.
- Avoid eating at your desk (or at least avoid eating things that are smelly and crunchy).
- Need some peace and quiet to read those all-important documents? Consider booking a meeting room.
- When receiving visitors please be respectful of other people working in the office and around the building.
- Ensure that visitors are accompanied and signed in and out accordingly.

### **13. Estates Office moves**

Estates are responsible for office moves (both internal and external). They have a process for staff to request temporary or permanent relocations between offices or the relocation of non-specialist facilities and furniture, support spaces and stores. The process will ensure there is a clearly understood procedure in place for the planning and execution of moves so that these are supported with the minimum of disruption to the business of the university. The distinction is made between 'internal' moves and 'external' moves.

**Internal moves** are defined as business as usual (BAU) and other small scale moves where only routine work is required to the estates and IT infrastructure to enable the move. Internal moves are carried out upon approval from Space planning team by Estates portage staff under the supervision of managers from the Estates department. Internal moves will not require an allocated budget; costs will normally be met from the recurrent budget for Office moves.

**External moves** are defined as larger scale moves that often form a direct part of a capital project, and as such will have provision for costs within the overall project budget. These moves may require associated infrastructure works, e.g. office refurbishment. The moves will usually be carried out by an external contractor using a supplier on the current framework. External moves will be supervised by an estates project manager or other member of the estate's management team.

#### **13.1 Moves process**

All requests for the move of staff offices and other general room moves that entail a change in the allocation of space are to be made to the Space Planning & Information Manager in the first instance by email. If the request is approved to

proceed it must be forwarded to the Estates Helpdesk via [ask@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ask@londonmet.ac.uk) so that a job number can be opened.

If there is a requirement to relocate or change IT equipment such as desktop PCs, printers, telephones etc IT helpdesk request needs to be submitted via ITS Self-service portal. The timescale for the move will be decided only with the agreement of ITS to ensure that technical support is available.

At the conclusion of the move, Estates will ensure that Space planning records are updated to reflect the change of location or change of use of the space

## **14. Reporting**

### **14.1 Maintenance**

The Estates Helpdesk is here to help everyone at the University with requests or problems relating to the buildings or facilities and is accessed by [ask@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:ask@londonmet.ac.uk).

The helpdesk is open Monday - Friday between 9am - 5pm.

For further information please go to the Estates webpage:

<https://staff.londonmet.ac.uk/support-services/estates/>

### **14.2 Incidents and Accidents**

All incident, accidents and near misses must be reported via the [Incident Report Form](#) (you will need to be logged into your London Met email account in order for you to complete the form).

Further advice and guidance can be found on the Health and Safety policy guidance page [Accident Reporting and Investigation Policy](#).