

**Imperial College Union**

**Health and Safety Committee**

Tuesday 10 April 2018

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| **AGENDA ITEM NO.** |  |
| **TITLE** | Noise Management In Union Spaces |
| **AUTHOR** | Malcolm Martin |
| **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** | Prolonged exposure to noise can led to permanent hearing damage which in most cases is irreversible. The Union has a legal obligation to ensure where reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of our employees and students.Some management systems exist to inform the way noise is managed within our commercial spaces. While some CSP’s have activities which produce noise and are evidently well managed, at present there isn’t a coherent approach to noise management across all CSP’s.  |
| **PURPOSE** | This paper is raising the issue of noise management in Union spaces and drawing attention to our legal obligations. Committee members are asked to consider: 1. What factors should be included in an approach to noise management for CSP’s?
2. How can best practise be captured and rolled out across the Union?
3. What approach could be adapted to challenge the subjectivity of noise management?
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| **DECISION/ACTION REQUIRED** | For Discussion and Action  |

**Noise Management in Union Spaces**

1. **Introduction**

Noise is part of everyday life, but loud noise can permanently damage hearing. Noise-induced hearing loss is the most common preventable occupational health hazard. There is no satisfactory treatment for noise induced hearing loss and although generally hearing loss is gradual, when you’re deaf, you stay deaf.

Noise can be defined as any audible unwanted, distracting or harmful sound which carries the risk of causing irreversible hearing damage, fatigue, stress and communication problems.

The level at which employers must provide hearing protection and hearing protection zones is 85 decibels (daily or weekly average exposure) and the level at which employers must assess the risk to workers' health and provide them with information and training is 80 decibels. There is also an exposure limit value of 87 decibels, taking account of any reduction in exposure provided by hearing protection, above which workers must not be exposed.

Legal Limits:

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| Lower exposure action values: | • daily or weekly exposure of 80 dB(A) • peak sound pressure of 135 dB. |
| Upper exposure action values: | • daily or weekly exposure of 85 dB(A) • peak sound pressure of 137 dB. |
| Levels of noise exposure which must not be exceeded: | • daily or weekly exposure of 87 dB(A) • peak sound pressure of 140 dB. |

Employers must assess the risk to workers’ health and provide them with information and training at 80 dB(A) and must provide hearing protection and hearing protection zones at 85 dB(A) (equivalent continuous daily exposure or weekly average exposure varies markedly from day to day).

1. **Our Responsibility**

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 states that Employers have a legal duty under this Act to ensure, so far as it reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.

The Control of Noise at Work Regulations states that employers must:

• assess the risks to their employees from noise at work

• take action to reduce the noise exposure that produces those risks

• provide employees with hearing protection if noise exposure cannot be reduced sufficiently by using other methods

• make sure the legal limits on noise exposure are not exceeded

• provide employees with information, instruction and training

• carry out health surveillance where there is a risk to health

1. **Noise in Union Spaces**

Within the context of the Union, the approach to noise management within our bars is outlined in appendix 1.

However, there isn’t a coherent, documented, systematic and consistent approach to noise management for CSP’s. The Union has over 370 CSP’s therefore one approach to noise management will not be suitable for all activities.

Sound activities are taken into account to some degree when yearly room bookings are undertaken and allocated. However, there is a limitation in terms of the time when CSP’s can undertake their activities and where such activities can take place. Most activities will take place after 5pm and stop at 11pm so there should be no late night noise.

Within Beit Quad, a number of external and internal stakeholders use the spaces during the day including the gym on level 3, the Union dining hall, concert hall and activities spaces 1 & 2.

1. Next Steps
	1. Develop an approach to CSP noise management in all Union spaces (including non SK locations)
	2. Discussions to be undertaken with key CSP’s to ascertain how they approach noise management within their activities capturing good practise and ideas
	3. Liaise with Beit Building management about the sustainability of facilities
	4. Ensure risk assessments include noise management controls
	5. Provide information to employees & students about the health impacts of prolonged exposure to noise and vibration

Malcolm Martin

Head of Finance & Resources

**Appendix 1**

License Trade Approach to Noise Management:

Beit Quad (SK Bar, Entertainments etc…)

* On nights with DJs and live music we record sound levels at key points around Beit. These are:
	+ Behind the Union, on Bremner Road
	+ On the RAH steps
	+ In centre of the Quad
	+ In the East Staircase of Beit Hall accommodation (on Wednesdays and Fridays specifically)
* Checks are carried our each hour.
* HI and LO decibel recommendations are set at 60 and 50 respectively.
* Checks are recorded in our steward folder and held for 12 months.

Rationale:

* To ensure our neighbours and Beit Hall residents are not being disturbed. Our spaces are not soundproofed, so it is important these checks are regular.

Reynolds Bar

* On nights with DJs and live music we record sound levels around the building.

Approach:

* + This involves a walk around the perimeter of the building, paying particular attention to the edges of the building that face residential roads – St Dunstans Road and Margravine Road
* Checks are carried our each hour.
* Checks are recorded in the manager’s event documents for the night and held for 12 months

Contractors

* Across both locations we ensure that all staff and contractors are notified of the fact they are working with high levels of sound during their training/induction. Earplugs are accessible in all bars and there are signs as to where these are kept.