

Vacant or Unoccupied

Building Checklist and Quick Risk Review



Is your building vacant or unoccupied?

The dictionary defines vacant as “something without content or occupant”, alternatively unoccupied is generally defined as “without occupant but still containing contents”. For the sake of simplicity, the terms vacant and unoccupied when used in reference to buildings on university campuses are considered to have the same meaning. Vacant or unoccupied buildings will be defined as any building that is:

- not used for the purposes of the business and/or
- untenanted and/or
- empty, void, vacant or disused and/or
- awaiting refurbishment, redevelopment, renovation or demolition for a period in excess of 45 consecutive days.

Most insurers regard long-term unoccupancy as a material fact, which must be disclosed to ensure that the policy remains valid. Whilst this is not a requirement of Unimutual’s protection wording, there is an expectation that a Member would actively engage with the mutual to seek advice where necessary in order to manage the suite of risks associated with vacant, unoccupied or disused buildings. Notwithstanding this expectation, it is recognised as good practice to continue to manage unoccupied buildings within the context of your asset management program in order to prevent damage, losses and claims.

Is use of this checklist compulsory and when should it be used?

No, use of the checklist is not compulsory, it is simply designed to alert Members who may not address unoccupied buildings within their asset management program, to the issues and potential risks associated with an unoccupied building.

This checklist applies to the management of buildings which currently are or soon to become unoccupied. It should be used when undertaking an inspection of an unoccupied building or cluster of unoccupied buildings. Ideally, the inspection team would be made up of a multidisciplinary group, which may include any combination of the risk manager, the facilities managers, security manager and allied stakeholders.

What is the purpose and intended outcome?

The purpose of this checklist is to assist Members to consider, identify and record issues, risks and controls associated with unoccupied or vacant buildings during an inspection. It is intended that information derived from this process be used in the development of strategies to manage unoccupied building or when transitioning a building(s) from an operational state to a state of care and maintenance.

Other outcomes from the process may include:

1. A record of the risks presented by an unoccupied building(s).
2. An indication of the overall level of risk presented by an unoccupied building(s).
3. Confirmation of the effectiveness of existing controls or identification of additional controls.
4. Development of risk-based strategies for care and maintenance of unoccupied buildings.
5. Assurance that the building remains on the asset register until such time as it is demolished or sold.
6. A means of assessing unoccupied buildings which are being considered for purchase by the university.

How do I use the checklist?

Step 1 – Record inspection details.

Record the details of the inspection including the building name and asset number, inspection date and names and positions of the inspection team (in Table 3).

Step 2 – Provide a response.

Whilst physically inspecting the building(s) work through each of the sections in the checklist and provide a YES or NO response against each of the issues listed.

Step 3 – Describe the risk(s).

The checklist is designed to permit consideration of and a brief description of the risk(s) associated with each of the issues contained in the checklist.

If you have responded YES, write a brief description of what you consider the risk to be. If you consider that the issue gives rise to more than one risk, describe the additional risk(s) as well.

Step 4 – Describe the controls.

If measures are in place which you consider are assisting to control the risk, records these as existing controls. If you consider that there are no controls in place, write NIL against existing controls. Where you consider that controls are required or that additional controls could reduce the risk further and cost effectively, describe these controls against additional controls.

Step 5 – “Quick score” the risks.

The quick scoring and rating approach associated with this checklist is inherently subjective and is designed to provide an indicative level of risk only. It is not a formal risk assessment methodology rather a “field tool” to help you classify the building as High, Medium or Low risk. Use the descriptors in Table 1 to “quick score” the risks.

Table 1 – Quick Risk Score Guide

Response	Risk Score	Description
No	0	The characteristic or issue does not apply to this building or you consider that no risks exist.
Yes	1	The characteristic or issue may present a risk, but exposure, likelihood and consequence are considered minor and there are satisfactory controls in place. The risk is unlikely to materialise.
Yes	2	The characteristic or issue potentially creates a risk which could further degrade asset condition, cause harm to people, the environment or the institutions reputation. There is some exposure to the conditions which give rise to the risk and controls could be improved. It is possible the risk will materialise.
Yes	3	The characteristic or issue may present a risk which has potential to significantly degrade the asset condition, lead to a financial loss, and cause harm to people, the environment or the institutions reputation. There is sufficient exposure to the conditions which give rise to the risk and there are no controls or those in place are ineffective. It is likely the risk will materialise.

Use your discretion when “quick scoring” the risks and consider not only the potential severity, but also extent of exposure to the risk, likelihood of occurrence and the existence and effectiveness of controls. In instances where you consider that the building presents a suite of unacceptable risks, a more detailed risk assessment should be undertaken.

Step 6 – Determine the overall building risk rating.

When each of the issues in the checklist have been considered as well as any additional issues which you have identified and recorded in Section 5 – Miscellaneous, tally the scores in the “risk score” column in order to obtain a total risk score (for the building). The building will be rated as either High, Medium or Low risk on the basis of the criteria contained in Table 2.

Table 2 – Risk Rating Criteria

Building Risk Rating	Total Risk Score	Management Considerations
High	51 - 102	<p>A management plan should be developed as a matter of priority.</p> <p>Consider preparing a more detailed building risk assessment in order to better define the risks.</p> <p>Regularly inspect the building from an asset management, security and safety perspective.</p> <p>Ensure executive/senior management are aware of and have endorsed the management plan and strategy for this building.</p>
Medium	21 - 50	<p>A management plan should be developed as soon as possible.</p> <p>Consider reviewing risks which rated a “quick risk score” of 3.</p> <p>Include the building on the existing asset management, security and safety (WHS) inspection schedules.</p> <p>Ensure that the management plan and strategy for this building have been communicated to all key and allied stakeholders.</p>
Low	0 - 20	<p>Manage the building condition, security and safety by routine procedures.</p>

Table 3 – Building Inspection Details

Name of the building(s)	
Asset number and or address	
Estimated value of the building(s)	
Date of review	
Name and positions of person(s) conducting the review	

Characteristic or Issue			Risk score	Risk description and control strategy
Section 1 – Building Description and Character (General)				
The building is single level	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	For information only	
The building has multiple levels	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	For information only (if yes, how many levels?)	
Is there more than one building in a cluster (part or whole of a campus)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	For information only (if yes, how many buildings?)	
Does the building have heritage value or is the building heritage listed or is it subject to a heritage order?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Is the building is in a remote or isolated location?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Is the building constructed of predominantly more flammable materials such as timber and weatherboard?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Does the building contain hazardous substances such as lead paint or asbestos sheeting, insulation or switchboards containing asbestos?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:

Are the external walls and roof in visibly poor condition?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Are windows and external doors in visibly poor condition?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Does the building have trees in the near vicinity with the potential for leaf fall into gutters or stormwater systems?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Are there external fuel oil or other tanks below or above ground or attached to the building?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Is the building surrounded by landscaped gardens which obscure the building from the road or main pedestrian thoroughfare? Or is the landscaping surrounding the building poorly maintained?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Is the asset intended for demolition?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Will the asset be refurbished?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:

Section 2 – Contents, Services and Fire Safety				
Does the building contain contents of any value, such as computers, electronic devices or artwork?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Does the building contain any furnishings or is it being used to store items such as office equipment, paper files or similar?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Have power (gas and electricity) services to be building been disconnected?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Have domestic water and/or fire water services to be building been disconnected?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Have fire extinguishers or fire suppression equipment been removed or fire/smoke detection disabled?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Are combustible items such as furniture, garbage bins or similar, stored adjacent to external walls?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:

Section 3 – Security				
Does the building have an awning or covered area where people may gather or secret themselves?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Are there any vulnerable access points (doors/windows) or evidence of attempted forced entry or vandalism?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Has exterior lighting been disabled or is not installed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Has timer initiated internal lighting been disabled or is not installed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Section 4 – Housekeeping and Work Health Safety				
Has security fencing been compromised?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Has the back to base security alarm been disabled?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Have security patrols of the building been discontinued?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:

Are there multiple or unaccounted copies of keys for the building?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Is it possible that squatters, itinerate persons or travellers might encamp in the building?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Has the building been removed from the asset inspection program?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Has the building been removed from the WHS inspection program?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Does the site contain potentially contaminated soil? (consider previous land use)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Are there any dangerous objects or unrectified asset defects which could cause injury?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Are there notifications or warnings which are required to be posted which are not yet posted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:

Does the site incorporate a hazardous materials store or is there the presence of hazardous or flammable substances? (other than asbestos and lead paint)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
Section 5 – Miscellaneous				
Does the site present uncontrolled hazards to those who may either inadvertently or wilfully gain access to the site?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Risk score	Risk: Existing Controls: Additional Controls:
TOTAL QUICK RISK SCORE				

Tally the risk scores and write the total here



Using Table 2 – ‘The Quick Risk Score Guide’, determine if the unoccupied building falls into the category of High Medium or Low risk. If the building is categorised as High or Medium risk, a management strategy should be developed to provide a framework for its ongoing management. The following section provides some guidance with respect to the heads of consideration that a management strategy may address.

Section 6 – Recommended Management Strategy

Asset Management

Security Management

Safety Management

Strategic Plan Considerations

Inspections Cycles

Escalation or Reporting

Responsibility and Accountability Matrix

Detailed Risk Assessment

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