



GUIDANCE NOTE

MOULD REMEDIATION GUIDANCE FOR EXPERT SURVEYORS

Assessing affected surfaces, selecting a remediation tier,
and identifying the cause and remedy.

October 2026

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Mould Remediation Guidance for Expert Surveyors

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This note sets out how to assess each surface on which mould was found, which tier of intervention to recommend, and how to explain why, so that your recommendations rest on the published guidance. It gives principles, not a formula: the recommendation in each room is your own professional opinion.

01 How to use this guidance

The guidance covers two linked tasks for every room in which mould is found:

- **Mould remediation:** deciding the level of intervention needed to remove the mould and make the room safe now, expressed as one of five tiers (sections 2 to 6).
- **Identification of cause and remedy:** establishing where the moisture came from and specifying the works that stop it returning (section 7).

For each room, record the tier with a short note of why it is needed, and the moisture source with a short note of the evidence for it, then describe the works for each. State the highest tier needed (for example "Tier 3") and describe the work that tier includes; the tiers are defined once, so there is no need to list each lower tier separately.

02 Why tiers, and why five

WHY A TIERED FRAMEWORK

No UK statute, British Standard or professional body publishes a scale of mould remediation methods. The published guidance does, however, draw the same distinctions again and again. The Government guidance separates cleaning hard surfaces from discarding absorbent materials, and occupant cleaning from work for qualified professionals. The PCA Code of Practice moves from a wash, to fungicidal paint as a holding measure, to removing and renewing affected plaster. RICS distinguishes hard surfaces from absorbent materials and small areas from a substantive part of a wall or ceiling. The Housing Ombudsman has called on landlords to take a risk-based approach to damp and mould.

A tiered framework simply puts those distinctions in order. It gives three practical benefits. Recommendations become consistent from one surveyor and one property to the next. The reasoning is visible: anyone reading the schedule can see what was recommended and why. And it lets you explain the range of reasonable opinion, the tier below and the tier above, as an expert is expected to do.

WHY FIVE TIERS

Each tier marks a change in **what is done to the material**, not just how much effort is spent on it:

Tier	What changes at this step
1 Clean	The growth is wiped off the surface
2 Protect	A coating is added to slow regrowth on the cleaned surface
3 Decontaminate	Growth and settled spores are physically removed under controlled conditions, without relying on the chemistry
4 Remove the surface layer	The layer holding the growth (paper, failed paint) is taken off and the substrate treated
5 Replace	The material itself cannot be kept and is removed and renewed

Five is the smallest number of steps that keeps genuinely different kinds of work apart.

Why not fewer or more? Fewer tiers would force genuinely different kinds of work into the same band, such as a protective coating and specialist decontamination, or stripping wallpaper and replacing plaster. Those differ in method, cost, disruption and whether the material is kept, so grouping them invites over-specification in some cases and under-specification in others. More tiers would start to divide work by degree rather than by kind, such as a light clean and a heavy clean, which is hard to evidence on inspection and hard to defend. Matters of degree, such as extent, occupant vulnerability and access, are better handled as judgement within a tier than as extra tiers.

WHAT THE FRAMEWORK IS AND IS NOT

The tiers rank the intensity of the intervention, not its effectiveness. A higher tier is not always better, and the tiers are not a sequence every property must pass through: you start at the lowest tier that will work. There is no single right answer. This framework is a reasonable professional interpretation of the published guidance, not a standard, and surveyors with deeper experience in particular construction types or contamination may refine it or reach a different view on a given surface. That is legitimate. Where your evidence points away from what this guidance suggests, follow the evidence and explain why. The framework will be reviewed as published guidance develops.

03 The principles

Every recommendation should be explainable by these seven principles. Each one comes from a published source, so when you apply it you are applying published guidance, not house rules.

#	Principle	What it means for you	Published support
1	Start with the least intrusive approach that will work	Ask first whether cleaning would remove the mould and make the area safe. Move up a tier only when the evidence says the lower one would not. Never start at the top because it is the most thorough.	GOV.UK guidance (hard surfaces can be cleaned); RICS consumer guide (graduated response by extent and material)
2	The surface decides how mould can be removed	Mould sits on the face of a non-porous surface and wipes off. On porous and absorbent materials it can be held within the material, where cleaning may not reach.	GOV.UK guidance (hard surfaces versus absorbent materials); RICS (may be difficult or impossible to remove from absorbent materials)

#	Principle	What it means for you	Published support
3	Where the moisture sits decides whether the material can stay	Moisture at the surface (condensation) usually leaves the material sound. Material wet through, or salt-contaminated, is removed and renewed once the cause is dealt with.	PCA Code of Practice, s.7.4; CIOB and CIH guide (sealing without adequate drying can make things worse)
4	The FIR tells you how much certainty you need	You do not assess the organisms. You use the fungal expert's findings to judge how far you can rely on a chemical treatment. The less is established, the more you rely on physically removing the growth.	The FIR (ACDP hazard group classification); the growth characteristics assessment's caution that laboratory evidence does not establish removal from porous materials
5	Removal and cause are always specified together	Remediation removes the hazard; correcting the cause stops it returning. A tier without the cause corrected is not an adequate answer.	PCA s.7.2 (treatment deals with symptoms only); RICS (treatments only address symptoms); CIOB and CIH (surface treatment alone is poor practice); 2025 Regulations, regs 2 and 4
6	Keep the work proportionate	Limit making good to the affected area and about 1 m around it, not the whole room, unless you can explain why more is needed. Price shared set-up once where several rooms are treated together.	2025 Regulations (make safe, prevent recurrence so far as is possible); RICS (proportionate remedial works)
7	Protect people and check the result	Larger areas need qualified professionals, doors kept shut, protective equipment, and verification on completion.	GOV.UK guidance (professionals for larger areas, PPE, doors shut); RICS (substantive part of a wall or ceiling needs professionals)

04 Assessing an affected surface

Before choosing a tier, establish these facts for each surface from your inspection notes, photographs and readings. If you cannot answer one, say so in the explanatory note rather than assume.

- Material and finish.** Glazed tile, ceramic, glass, uPVC or gloss paint (non-porous); painted plaster or plasterboard (porous); wallpaper or lining paper; textured coating; timber or masonry.
- Condition.** Is the material sound, or is it soft, crumbling, delaminating, blistered or stained through?
- Extent.** Roughly how large is the affected area? A substantive part of a wall or ceiling calls for professional work (GOV.UK, RICS).
- Where the moisture sits.** At the surface, or through the material? Use readings and the pattern of the dampness, not appearance alone.
- A layer holding the growth.** Is there paper, lining paper or failed paint that the growth sits within or behind?
- History.** Has the mould returned after earlier treatment that was properly carried out?
- The growth characteristics assessment for the room.** What does its summary say about the organisms and the evidence for treatment (section 6)?
- Constraints.** A textured coating, or old paint, in a pre-2000 dwelling must be presumed to contain asbestos or lead until tested.

05 Choosing the tier

Use the facts from section 4 to find the lowest tier that gives a reasonable expectation that the mould will be removed and the area made safe. The table shows when each tier is usually right. It is a guide to your judgement, not a rule: where the evidence points elsewhere, say so and give your reason.

Tier	Usually right when	Why the tier below is not enough	Why you do not need the tier above	Published support
1 Clean	The surface is non-porous: glazed tile, ceramic, glass, uPVC, gloss paint. This holds whatever organisms are reported.	Nothing below it	The growth sits on the face and cleaning removes it completely. A fungicidal coating or sealant is not applied to tile, glass, uPVC or ceramic.	GOV.UK and RICS: mould on hard surfaces is removed with a mould and mildew product, then left to dry
2 Protect	Limited growth on a sound painted plaster or plasterboard surface, where only Hazard Group 1 organisms are reported	Cleaning a porous surface removes visible growth but may leave traces within it	The organisms have low potential for harm and the surface is sound, so specialist decontamination is not justified	PCA s.7.2: fungicidal paint may address minor localised issues, always alongside correcting the cause
3 Decontaminate	A sound porous surface (painted plaster, plasterboard with an intact paper face) where Hazard Group 2 organisms are reported and the effectiveness of treatment is not established for all of them; or a larger area	You cannot rely on a wash or coating to deal with growth within a porous surface when treatment of the organisms present is not established. Physical removal under controlled conditions does not depend on the chemistry	There is no paper or failed paint holding the growth, and it has not returned after professional cleaning	GOV.UK and RICS: larger areas need qualified professionals; growth characteristics assessment: laboratory evidence does not establish removal from porous materials
4 Remove the surface layer	Growth held in a removable layer (wallpaper, lining paper, flaking or blistered paint) over a sound, dry substrate; or growth that returned after Tier 3 was properly carried out	Growth on the back of paper and in the paste cannot be reached from the front, so the layer has to come off before the substrate can be treated	The substrate beneath is sound and dry, shown by your readings	GOV.UK: absorbent materials may have to be discarded; RICS: may be impossible to remove mould completely from absorbent materials

Tier	Usually right when	Why the tier below is not enough	Why you do not need the tier above	Published support
5 Replace	Material wet through or salt-contaminated by rising damp, penetrating damp or a leak; plasterboard with growth through the paper face, or soft or delaminating; textured coatings	No cleaning or surface treatment can reach moisture and growth within the material. Plasterboard cannot have its surface removed without destroying it. Textured coatings must not be sanded or scraped	Nothing above it	PCA s.7.4: affected plaster removed and renewed once the cause is dealt with; GOV.UK: materials that cannot be cleaned may have to be discarded

Three points to keep in mind:

- **One room can need more than one tier.** Assess each surface separately: tiled walls at Tier 1 and a papered wall at Tier 4 in the same room is normal. Give each its own line in your schedule.
- **Wallpaper with only Hazard Group 1 organisms.** The paper still has to come off, but stripping it and then cleaning and protecting the plaster may be enough. Explain why the controlled Tier 4 process is or is not needed.
- **Tier 5 and the cause.** Replastering or reinstatement follows only once the cause has been corrected and the material has dried, or the new work will fail in the same way. Say so in the note and sequence the works to correct the cause first.

06 Reading the growth characteristics and colonisation assessment

The fungal expert's (a mycologist, microbiologist or other suitably qualified specialist) property-specific assessment of growth characteristics and colonisation is, at present, an addendum to the Fungal Interpretation Report and will in future form part of the report itself. In this guidance it is called the growth characteristics assessment. It ends each room with a summary. Read that summary, quote it in your explanatory note, and use it for one purpose: to judge how far you can rely on a chemical treatment for that room. You are not giving a fungal or microbiological opinion, and you should not paraphrase or add to the expert's words.

If the summary says	It means	Effect on your choice
The species reported "are not assessed in the current appendix"	Only Hazard Group 1 organisms were found	The surface and moisture decide the tier; a protective coating after cleaning is usually enough on a sound porous surface
"Laboratory evidence exists for each species reported"	Hazard Group 2 organisms, each with laboratory evidence that treatment works	Treatment may help, but the assessment notes the evidence does not establish removal from porous materials, so porous surfaces still point to physical removal
Effectiveness "has not been established" (for some or all species)	Hazard Group 2 organisms, at least one without species-level evidence	Do not rely on a wash or coating on porous surfaces; rely on physical removal (Tier 3 or above)
"No fungal species reported in this room"	No sample result for the room	If you saw mould there, treat it like the most affected room. The Fungal Interpretation Report explains that spores and fragments move between rooms

Two cautions from the fungal expert's reports themselves are worth keeping in mind. DNA identification does not by itself establish that the organisms are alive or growing within the building fabric. And absence of evidence is not evidence that treatment will fail. Neither changes the principle: where the outcome is uncertain on a porous surface, physical removal is the reliable route. If any Hazard Group 3 organism is ever reported, seek specific advice before specifying the work.

07 Identification of cause and remedy

For each room, record one of the four moisture sources below, and give the evidence that led you to it. RICS makes the point that the source of the moisture has to be found before the problem can be solved, and that more than one form is often present at once. If two apply in a room, record both.

Moisture source	Evidence that points to it	Typical corrective works
Condensation	Growth on the coldest surfaces (external walls, window reveals, ceiling edges, corners, behind furniture); worse in winter; no tide marks or salts; moisture at the surface only	Repair or provide ventilation that works; restore adequate heating; improve thermal performance at cold spots; replace single glazing
Penetrating damp	Dampness in a position matching an external defect; worse in and after rain; sometimes tide marks; moisture through the wall	Repair the external defect (rainwater goods, roof, pointing, render, seals); allow the wall to dry before internal reinstatement
Rising damp	Dampness confined to the lower wall; tide mark; hygroscopic salts; moisture falling with height	Remove the bridge or ground moisture pathway (lower ground levels, clear bridging); allow drying before replastering
Internal leak or escape of water	Localised patches and track marks centred on or below a source; no link to weather; may date from a particular event	Repair the leak; dry the affected materials; replace those that cannot be dried or cleaned

For condensation, keep to this principle: it is usually the product of several interacting factors, and no percentage split between them is supportable. Identify the factors within the landlord's control (ventilation, heating, fabric, disrepair) and specify the works that correct them. Do not attribute the mould to the

occupier's lifestyle; RICS recognises that everyday tasks unavoidably produce moisture and that many factors are outside the tenant's control.

08 Writing it up

Write each entry in your own words, briefly and in the first person. A good remediation note covers, in this order: where the mould is and on what material; where the moisture sits; the summary from the growth characteristics assessment for the room, quoted; why this tier is needed; and why a higher one is not. A good cause note gives the moisture source, the evidence for it, and the defect within the landlord's control that the works correct.

The remedial action describes the package of work up to the tier stated, the area it covers (the affected area and about 1 m around it), and any sequence that matters, such as replastering only after the wall has dried.

Example, remediation note, papered bedroom wall

Tier 4. Mould on papered walls at the external wall and window reveal; moisture at the surface. The growth characteristics assessment for this room states: "Treatment may be appropriate for part of the contamination, but its effectiveness against every species present has not been established." Growth on the back of the paper and in the paste cannot be reached from the front, so the paper has to come off before the plaster can be treated. The plaster beneath is sound and dry, so replacement is not required.

Example, cause note, the same room

Condensation. Mould on the external wall and window reveal, with no evidence of penetrating or rising damp. The window cannot be opened, so the room cannot be ventilated, and the radiator is defective, so it cannot be adequately heated. Both lower surface temperatures and let humidity build.

PHRASES THAT GET PICKED APART

Avoid	Why	Say instead
"UK guidance sets out these tiers"	No publication sets out a tier hierarchy; the framework is a professional interpretation	"Applying the methodology set out above"
"The species means Tier X"	Species alone does not select a tier, and it is outside your expertise	"Having regard to the growth characteristics assessment, I cannot rely on a wash alone"
"Seal over the mould"	Coating removes nothing and is never applied over uncleaned growth	"Clean, dry, then a fungicidal coating"
"Spores left behind will regrow"	Spores are in all indoor air; regrowth comes from growth left in the material plus moisture	"Growth left within the surface would resume once moisture allows"
"Lifestyle" or "tenant behaviour" as the cause	Not supported by RICS or the Housing Ombudsman; condensation is multi-factorial	Name the defects in ventilation, heating or fabric
"Bleach the area"	GOV.UK and RICS prefer mould and mildew products to bleach	"An HSE-approved fungicidal wash"

09 Sources

These are the core publications this guidance relies on. Read the passages cited before you rely on them in evidence.

Source	Passages that matter most
GOV.UK. Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home	Removing mould: hard surfaces, mould products in preference to bleach, professionals for larger areas, absorbent materials discarded
Property Care Association. Code of Practice for the Investigation and Control of Dampness in Buildings	s.7.2 mould growth and fungicidal treatment; s.7.4 removal and renewal of affected plaster
RICS consumer guide. Damp and mould (June 2025)	Forms of damp, causes of condensation, controlling and removing mould, advice for landlords
CIOB and CIH. Tackling damp and mould (2026)	Root causes, poor practice of surface treatment alone, moisture pathways, inspection and diagnosis
Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025	Reg 2 (make safe), reg 4 (required work, prevent recurrence so far as is possible)
Fungal Interpretation Report and growth characteristics and colonisation assessment for the property (fungal expert)	Hazard groups (ACDP), room summaries, limits of laboratory evidence

Also relevant:

- HSE, asbestos essentials task sheet a28: textured coatings must not be sanded or scraped.
- British Gypsum guidance on water-damaged plasterboard: plasterboard with mould growth should generally be replaced.
- Housing Ombudsman, Spotlight on damp and mould: It's not lifestyle (2021): why condensation should not be put down to occupier behaviour.
- CPR Practice Direction 35, para 3.2: give the literature relied on and reasons for your opinion.

This guidance is advisory. It is a professional interpretation of published UK guidance and does not replace the independent judgement of the expert, whose duty is to the court.