



# Fire Safety Policy

**University of Essex**

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# 1. Policy Statement and Scope

This Policy defines fire safety arrangements for the protection of all persons using University of Essex premises or at events/activities organised by the University. This includes separate legal entities, tenants, those with memoranda of understanding in place, staff, students and visitors. Consideration of the requirements of the Policy is to be given and arrangements are being made for planning, organisation, controlling, monitoring and reviewing fire safety measures.

This Policy applies for all areas under the control of the University of Essex, including Colchester, Loughton and Southend premises. The University of Essex recognises its responsibility to comply with current legislation and appropriate guidelines with regards to fire safety. The University also recognises its moral duty of care to protect the lives of its staff, students and others who visit its premises.

The loss of buildings and infrastructure due to fire also poses significant risks to the research and teaching functions undertaken within. The University will prioritise fire safety across the Estate.

The University of Essex will ensure that the risk from fire will be managed in compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (2005), the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999), the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and other relevant legislation.

Management of fire risks will be undertaken in such a way as to prevent injury or ill-health to employees, students, visitors, contractors and others who may be affected by the activities of the organisation, as far as is reasonably practicable.

The aim of this Policy is to provide a robust fire safety framework which will be implemented to secure the safety and wellbeing of everyone within the University community and to protect the University's assets. To achieve this aim, the University makes the following commitments:

- To have appointed competent persons in fire safety;
- To create and maintain suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments of all premises and activities under its control;
- To make available sufficient resources in the form of time allocated, personnel and finances, in order to facilitate fire safety in the University;
- To identify and implement reasonably practicable control measures to reduce risks from fire;
- To control and maintain safely all plant including electrical and gas systems;
- To use and store hazardous substances in a safe manner;
- To provide both voluntary and mandatory suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training in fire safety to all staff and to make available fire safety awareness training and information to students;
- To test evacuation and other emergency procedures regularly and to maintain all emergency and precautionary equipment;

- To conduct regular fire safety inspections;
- To ensure effective liaison with the local fire authority where appropriate;
- To ensure all testing and maintenance of fire safety equipment and is undertaken.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities within the University

### 2.1 Specific duties

This section sets out specific duties and responsibilities for the implementation and management of fire safety as follows:

#### Key:

**CP** = Competent Persons

**DE** = Director of Estates

**RP** = Responsible Person

(The RP and DE can only be responsible for areas to any extent under their control)

| Position                        | Role | Responsibility   |
|---------------------------------|------|--|
| Vice Chancellor                 | RP   | Overall responsibility for ensuring the fire safety of all persons on University property that is to any extent under their control and the protection of any University property of national or historic importance   |
| Students' Union Chief Executive | RP   | Responsible for areas that are to any extent under their control. Responsibility for ensuring the fire safety of all persons and the protection of any University property of national or historic importance in so far as it is under their control   |
| Director of Estates             | DE   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Maintain the University's buildings and equipment in line with current legislation and requirements of the fire risk assessments.</li> <li>■ Ensure delivery of necessary remedial action and improvements</li> <li>■ Ensure reasonably practicable arrangements are in place for emergencies across the campuses.</li> <li>■ Ensure that the design and build of new assets is in line with current legislative requirements for fire safety.</li> </ul> |

| Position   | Role | Responsibility  |
|--|------|---|
| Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing (Including Fire Safety Manager) | CP   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provide competent fire safety staff who can give specialist advice, direction and, as appropriate, management to the University and its subsidiaries on fire safety precautions and the implementation of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order</li> <li>■ Support the University and its subsidiaries in undertaking and organising fire risk assessments.</li> <li>■ Provide fire safety training to employees and students of the University and its subsidiaries.</li> <li>■ Co-ordinate and monitor fire protection arrangements across the University.</li> <li>■ Co-ordinate regular fire evacuation drills and maintain appropriate records.</li> <li>■ Provide advice, guidance and maintain records for staff and student Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)</li> </ul> |
| Head of Security & Campus Safety                                       | CP   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure suitable security coverage is given for all three campuses to aid in fire prevention and evacuation.</li> <li>■ Ensure all security staff have the relevant training and refresher training to undertake their duties in relation to fire prevention and evacuation</li> </ul>  |
| Security and Campus Safety Operatives                                  | CP   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Co-ordinate the evacuation of campus buildings and assist in practice evacuation drills.</li> <li>■ Liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service</li> <li>■ Assist persons that may have difficulty in evacuation.</li> <li>■ Very limited fire fighting</li> <li>■ Assist the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team in ensuring compliance with fire safety procedures</li> </ul>   |

## 2.2 Other Responsibilities

Other groups' legal and moral responsibilities in promoting fire safety within the University are highlighted below.

### 2.2.1 Fire Marshals

Staff appointed as Fire Marshals are in place to assist with fire safety. Their responsibilities are to report any fire safety deficiencies and aid evacuation by undertaking a fire sweep in their areas. Fire Marshals only commence their duties once they have completed in-house training.

### 2.2.2 Heads of Departments and Sections

Heads of departments and sections have the following responsibilities:

- Ensure adequate risk assessments have been undertaken for any activities carried out by the Department/Section that significantly impact on fire safety (e.g. use of highly flammable substances, naked flame, hot works etc.) and ensure the necessary control measures and emergency arrangements are in place.
- As far as reasonably practicable, appoint staff members within their areas of responsibility as Fire Marshals and ensure they attend university delivered fire marshal training. In some areas, such as accommodation, the role of Fire Marshal is covered wholly by security. Heads of Departments/Sections must ensure details of trained staff members are included in the Department's/Sections Health and Safety Management Statement.
- Ensure that there is a system in place for communicating fire safety arrangements and emergency evacuation procedures to staff, students and visitors in their area of control.
- When on scene during an emergency evacuation, work with Campus Security offering support as required. In some circumstances, where for any reason Campus Security are not available, Heads of Departments / Sections may have to take charge and liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service.
- Ensure the welfare is considered of persons that have evacuated a building.

### 2.2.3 Managers

Managers have the following responsibilities:

- Ensure everyone under their control knows:
  - What actions to take in the event of a fire
  - Escape routes in their places of work and where to assemble in case of an evacuation.
  - How to report fire safety hazards
  - How to access relevant fire risk assessments for their department

- When on scene during an emergency evacuation, as required, liaise with Campus Security. In some circumstances, where for any reason Campus Security are not available, Managers may have to take charge and liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service.
- Encourage staff and students who may have difficulty evacuating to contact the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team to establish if a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is required.
- Where relevant to their location, and on advice from the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team, post-PEEP assessment, nominate sufficient people to operate evacuation equipment and ensure they are trained in its use.
- Ensure that any premises faults or insufficiently controlled potential causes of fire are reported and dealt with promptly.
- Consult the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team when planning any changes to layout, working practices or staffing which may impact on fire safety.

## **2.2.4 Supervisors of Visitor Groups**

Supervisors of visitor groups (e.g. lecturers, event leaders) have the following responsibilities:

- When organising an event, ensure that adequate arrangements are in place for fire safety and emergency evacuations.
- Liaise with the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team when organising larger events.
- Ensure everyone under their control knows the actions to take and where to assemble in case of an emergency evacuation.
- Organise a PEEP for persons under their responsibility who may have difficulty evacuating, regardless of the length of their visit.
- Ensure that everyone under their control evacuates when required to do so.
- Check fire safety arrangements are adequate as part of the planning of offsite activities with groups of students and ensure that emergency evacuation arrangements are communicated to all participants on the trips.

## **2.2.5 All staff**

- Follow relevant fire safety precautions and evacuation procedures.
- Complete fire safety induction training and other fire safety training as may be necessary for their role.
- Evacuate immediately if the fire alarm sounds, closing doors when leaving. Ensure visitors or anyone under their responsibility evacuates.
- Report any fire safety issues to a manager and as appropriate to the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team and Helpdesk.

- Contact the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team if there may be a problem evacuating due to personal circumstances, even if temporary, to arrange a PEEP.

## 2.2.6 Students

When staying in campus accommodation, students must:

- Comply with the terms of their tenancy agreement.
- Complete the online fire safety training and follow the guidance therein.
- Make the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team aware if, for any reason, temporary or permanent, they may have difficulty in evacuating a building.
- Report any fire safety issues within their accommodation building, such as faulty emergency lighting, damaged fire doors or obscured escape routes.

When not staying in campus accommodation, students must:

- Make the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team aware if, for any reason, temporary or permanent, they may have difficulty in evacuating a building.
- Make themselves aware of localise fire safety and evacuation procedures.
- Report any fire safety issues seen on campus, such as faulty emergency lighting, damaged fire doors or obscured escape routes.

## 2.2.7 Contractors

All contractors undertaking works in any of the campuses, Colchester, Loughton or Southend, must comply with the [Health and Safety Information and Code of Practice for Contractors](#), which contains clear instructions on the required practice in relation to fire safety.

# 3. Fire Risk Assessments

Fire risk assessments are undertaken at suitable intervals, and they set the standards for fire safety and the measures necessary to reduce fire safety risks as far as reasonably practicable. Fire risk assessments at the University are only undertaken by competent persons as required by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Fire risk assessments are constantly monitored to assess how effectively the risk is being controlled. The assessments are reviewed when there is any reason to suspect that they are no longer valid or there has been a significant change in an area of a campus that has affected our fire precautions. Assessment review dates will be no longer than three years apart.



# 4. Competency, Training and Awareness

The University recognises the legal and moral obligation to provide suitable and sufficient training and awareness-raising to staff and students. The University also makes use of this training to review the awareness and competency of staff for their required tasks. Different required training is required for some groups, as detailed below.

## 4.1 Security and Campus Safety

All staff must have attended face-to-face, enhanced fire / evacuation training bespoke to the University's requirements. This training includes the practical use of fire extinguisher units and evacuation equipment. This training is to be completed on commencement of employment but no later than within the first six months of employment. New security and campus safety employees will be accompanied by experienced team members when attending incidents and will not be allowed take up fire safety responsibilities, such as tackling a fire or operation of evacuation equipment, until training is complete.

Training must be refreshed at a minimum of three years, or sooner as required.

## 4.2 Staff Fire Marshals

Staff Fire Marshals must have attended face to face training bespoke to the University's requirements before they take up their additional fire safety responsibilities. The training must be refreshed at a minimum of every three years.

## 4.3 All Staff

All staff must complete an online fire safety induction training course upon the start of their role. Booster training must be completed in line with the Essential Training Policy.

## 4.4 Students

### Staying in campus accommodation

All students staying on campus within student accommodation must complete their compulsory fire safety training. This should be completed before coming onto campus.

### Not staying in campus accommodation

Although not mandatory, it is highly recommended that all students not staying on campus complete either the online fire safety induction or attend face-to-face fire safety awareness sessions.

# 5. Prevention, Detection, and Evacuation

## 5.1 Fire Prevention

The number one priority for fire safety at the University is the prevention of fires. This is achieved in a number of ways, with all staff required to assist in helping with adherence. It is the legal and moral responsibility of all employees to co-operate in order to help reduce the likelihood of a fire.

Measures include but are not limited to:

- Corridors, stairways, landings and escape routes must be kept clear at all times of anything that is likely to cause a fire or accident or to impede evacuation in an emergency.
- Hazardous materials must be stored, used and disposed of in accordance with all legal requirements and safe working practices. See the [Hazardous Substances Safety page](#) for more information.
- Combustible items such as cardboard and paper are to be kept away from sources of ignition such as electrical items or heaters.
- All firefighting equipment must be kept free from obstruction and be readily available for use in an emergency. Portable firefighting equipment must not be removed or repositioned without authority from the Estates and Campus Services (Maintenance, Capital and Development team) or the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team.
- Any obvious or suspected damage to, or misuse of, a fire alarm or firefighting equipment must be reported immediately to the Estates Help Desk ([ems-helpdesk@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ems-helpdesk@essex.ac.uk)).
- Action, up to and including disciplinary and legal action, may be taken should any person be found to be causing damage to or deliberately and wilfully misusing any item provided for fire safety.

### 5.1.1 Smoking and related materials

The University's [no smoking policy](#) covers all campus buildings. The use of smoking materials (including e-cigarettes) is strictly prohibited in all buildings; any smoking must be kept at a distance of five metres from buildings. The University's no smoking policy includes all parts of student residences.

### 5.1.2 Electrical Safety

Formal Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) on electrical equipment is undertaken by competent persons at set intervals dependant on the item, its use, age and location.

A number of electrical items are prohibited under University rules. These are outlined on the [Electrical Safety page](#) of the University website.

In line with legal requirements, Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR) are undertaken by a competent person on all electrical installations over a period of no more than five years.

### **5.1.3 Hot works and high-risk activities**

All hot works, whether conducted by an in-house team or contracted out, are subject to the University Permit to Work system.

High risk activities using ignition sources (e.g. naked flames, lasers etc) and those with high fuel loads (e.g. areas storing highly flammable materials) must have relevant risk assessments in place and be carefully managed. Where it is reasonably practicable, naked flames or other potentially high-risk ignition sources are to be replaced by alternative means which do not pose a risk of fire.

### **5.1.4 Arson**

Arson is a common cause of fire. To combat it, all staff and students should report any suspicious activity or perceived fire safety weaknesses to Security. Items left external to buildings are often a target for arson and consequently waste and similarly combustible materials are to be kept at least five metres away from buildings. In certain circumstances, and only when approved by the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team, items in a secure fire-proof surrounding can be stored less than five metres from a building.

### **5.1.5 Dangerous Substances**

Fire risk assessments and [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health assessments](#) will cover the use and storage of low-risk substances. However, where there are substances or items that may create an explosion risk, a [Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmosphere Regulations 2002, \(DSEAR\)](#) assessment must be undertaken. Once completed, any actions arising from the DSEAR assessment will require completion. The responsibility for ensuring that the DSEAR assessment is undertaken sits with the Heads of Department. The Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing team will work with and support relevant management of an area using or storing the hazardous substances that come under DSEAR.

The Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing team must be consulted before substances in a quantity under the scope of the DSEAR are brought onto any campus.

### **5.1.6 Fire Compartmentation**

The main control of the spread of fire and smoke is the compartmentation of buildings. This includes the walls, ceilings, floors and doors. Fire doors, glazing and ironmongery are fire rated, with modern doors having a minimum of 30-minute fire protection. Due to their age, some fire doors on campus will not have evidence of their standard but are still legally acceptable and safe to have in-situ. These doors will be risk assessed as “Nominal” doors.

All fire doors will be part of continued localised inspection by competent in-house or external persons. Inspections are undertaken at a schedule set appropriate to the fire doors’ use and location but at a time no greater than annually.

Walls, floors and ceilings to fire compartments should be sealed to form protection against the spread of fire and smoke. Where there are penetrations required to such compartments (e.g. to run IT cabling or other piping), permission to undertake this work must be obtained from Estates and Campus Services. Any penetrations to fire compartmentation must be fire sealed after the work is completed, either by the contractor/department at the

time or a third party after the work is completed. Any person undertaking works to seal a penetration must be deemed competent for the level of work required.

## 5.2 Fire Detection

Buildings on all three campuses have fire alarm systems. These can be triggered automatically via detectors or manually using a call point. These systems are tested and serviced at regular intervals, with records maintained. Requirements are set in the Testing, Inspection and Maintenance of Fire Safety Equipment document.

Detectors/sensors must not be covered unless in certain circumstances, such as some building / refurbishment works. In these circumstances, a Permit to Work and associated Fire Form must be issued via Estates and Campus Services.

## 5.3 Evacuation

In the event of hearing the alarms, whether suspected to be a practice or not, the University evacuation procedures must be followed. Failure to co-operate in an evacuation could lead to staff or student disciplinary procedures. Details of the University's fire evacuation procedures can be found in the [Fire Evacuation policy](#).

In most circumstances, Campus Security will take charge in an emergency evacuation situation. If, for any reason, Campus Security are not available, the most senior person at the scene, for example Heads of Departments / Sections or Managers, may have to take charge and liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service.

Unless in exceptional circumstances such as a pandemic, practice evacuations (fire drills) are undertaken annually. These drills cover all areas of all campuses including student accommodation.

### 5.3.1 Emergency Lighting and Signage

#### Lighting

Emergency lighting is provided to ensure that high risk areas are adequately lit, and all means of escape can be effectively identified and safely used by occupants of the building in an emergency situation. These systems are tested and serviced at regular intervals, with records maintained.

#### Signage

Relevant fire safety signage is provided by Estates and Campus Services in conjunction with guidance from the Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing team. Such signage includes:

- The means of escape
- Fire doors (and associated instructions)
- Firefighting equipment
- Fire action notices

Building occupiers must be careful to ensure that any changes they or their contractors make to their workspaces do not compromise any fire safety signage and, if necessary, seek the provision of new signage.

### **5.3.2 Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)**

The University aims to assist any person who may have difficulty in evacuating any of its buildings in the event of an emergency, such as a fire. These difficulties could arise from permanent, long term or temporary reasons.

Although not exhaustive, the following is a guide as to potential reasons for difficulties:

- Mobility impairment ranging from strains and sprains to use of walking aids and wheelchairs; most relevant are problems using stairs, travelling distances or opening doors.
- Visual or hearing problems, in particular not becoming aware that a fire alarm has actuated or being able to follow directions (signs or verbal)
- Dexterity issues which may cause difficulty opening doors.
- Cognitive problems or learning difficulties; those relevant would include panic attacks or difficulty in following or comprehending instructions.

Staff and students or relevant managers or academic staff must make the Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing team aware if a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan is required. Please see the [PEEP page on the University website](#) for more information.

Evacuation equipment is provided where required and is to be operated only by those trained and competent to do so. This would generally be Campus Security operatives. The equipment is inspected and serviced as required but no longer than annually. Users of the equipment must have refresher training at minimum annually.

### **5.3.3 Maximum Room Occupancy**

The maximum occupancy of teaching rooms is indicated via the room booking system. These maximum limits must not be exceeded. This figure will vary with the size of the room and its exits. Overloading a room could increase the time it takes to evacuate and place the room users at risk.

## **5.4 Fire Fighting Equipment**

Portable firefighting equipment, i.e. fire extinguishers and blankets are provided across the University's buildings as deemed necessary. Extinguishers must only be used by those competent to do so via training and experience. All firefighting equipment must be inspected at timeframes established in the University Testing, Inspection and Maintenance of Fire Safety Equipment Policy. Interference with firefighting equipment is a serious offence and could lead to disciplinary action.

The University also has fixed firefighting equipment in the form of dry risers and fire suppression systems. Dry risers are for use by the Fire and Rescue Services and are inspected on an annual basis; the suppression systems are maintained in accordance with the University of Essex

# 6. Resources

Below is a list of resources that support and evidence the management of fire safety at the University of Essex.

- [Health and Safety Information and Code of Practice for Contractors](#)
- [No Smoking Policy](#)
- [Fire Evacuation Policy](#)
- [Fire Safety webpages](#)
- [Electrical Safety webpage](#)

# 7. Monitoring and Review

This Policy will be reviewed at a minimum of 3-year intervals by the Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing team, with monitoring in line with any change to best practice, legislation or significant change to University campuses.

## Document Control Panel

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
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