



Queen’s University Belfast

fire safety policy

Estates Directorate

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Developed by Estates Directorate

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The Fire & Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 requires that all employers shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of its employees in respect of harm caused by fire in the workplace, which includes, ‘*developing a coherent overall fire prevention policy which covers technology, organisation of work and the influence of factors relating to the working environment’.*

1. Policy Statement

The Queen’s University of Belfast recognises that the principles and practice of good fire safety are essential to ensure that all those involved in our institution are protected from the risks associated with fire.

Measures have been put in place to achieve an appropriate level of fire safety within all of our premises and the risk from fire will be managed in compliance with the Fire & Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and the Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

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.

1. Policy Objectives

The Estates Directorate is committed to the following objectives:

* Giving advice to those persons with a responsibility for fire safety in University premises to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation.
* Facilitating the training of staff and students in fire safety matters.
* Coordination of effective fire evacuation procedures.
* Ensuring effective liaison with the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.
* Management of suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments of all premises and activities within premises.
* Identifying and implementing reasonably practicable control measures to control risks from fire.
* Assisting, where required, annual fire evacuation drills
* Maintenance of all fixed and portable fire safety equipment.
* Conducting regular fire safety reviews.
* Increasing fire safety awareness among staff and students.
1. Definitions

Policy abbreviation are as follows:

NIFRS – Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service

FSMS – Fire Safety Management System

FRA – Fire Risk Assessment

PFO – Premises Fire Officer

EC – Evacuation Controller

EO – Evacuation Officers

FW – Fire Warden

PEEP – Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan

FFE – Fire Fighting Equipment

1. Policy

This policy is applicable to all premises and workplaces within the direct control of Queen’s University, where the University is a tenant this policy will apply to areas under its control unless it conflicts with or duplicates the landlord or owner’s fire safety requirements. In addition to the University’s responsibilities, all employees, regardless of role or location, have duties under Fire Safety Legislation. The Fire and Rescue Service is the enforcing authority for these matters.

* 1. Management

 Heads of School and Directors are considered to be the ***‘Appropriate Person’*** under Fire Safety Legislation and to the extent that they have control, they are responsible for ensuring that adequate and effective fire precautions are in place for areas within their responsibility.

Day to day responsibility for these matters may be delegated to Premises Fire Officers and others, but accountability remains with the Head of School or Director.

The Fire and Rescue Service is the arbiter of which individuals may be subject to prosecution in the event that any deficiencies are discovered during statutory fire safety audits, following a fire or complaint to the Fire and Rescue Service.

5.2 Estates Directorate

The Estates Directorate is responsible for ensuring that any installed fire precautions, including but not limited to fire alarm systems, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and smoke control equipment meet the appropriate standards and are maintained in accordance with those standards.

The Estates Directorate is also responsible for ensuring that the design and construction of new premises or any alterations to existing premises comply with premises fire safety regulations or other standards approved by the relevant enforcing authorities.

5.3 Estates Manager / Assistant Estates Manager (Fire Safety)

The Estates Manager / Assistant Estates Manager (Fire Safety) are responsible for providing advice and recommendations concerning the fire safety related management, design and construction of premises.

The Estates Manager / Assistant Estates Manager (Fire Safety) will also provide advice, support and training for local management in carrying out their fire safety responsibilities.

The Estates Manager / Assistant Estates Manager (Fire Safety) will investigate, produce reports and provide recommendations following all fire incidents and monitor the University’s statutory fire safety compliance, implementing remedial measures as required.

5.4 Employee/Student Responsibility

Employees, regardless of their role or location and students are obliged to co-operate with the requirements of this policy and must not obstruct or interfere with any fire safety measures.

Employees are specifically required by legislation to comply with all of the University’s fire safety arrangements and to inform the University of any risk to life from fire arising in the course of their work.

Students are also required to comply with the University’s Conduct Regulations in respect of fire safety.

1. Procedures

6.1 Fire Risk Assessment (FRAs)

A fire risk assessment must be undertaken for all workplaces and appropriate control measures should be put in place to remove or reduce the risk. The fire risk assessment process will be managed by the Estates Manager / Assistant Estates Manager (Fire Safety).

The University has adopted a FRA review sequesnce of 1, 3 and 5 year intervals with prioritisation based on the following:

* 1 year – sleeping accommodation, heritage buildings, large complex buildings and those with a single stair as the means of escape or an unusually high fire risk.
* 3 years – modern buildings with a relatively low life risk and those which are fully compliant with current Building Control fire safety regulations.
* 5 years – buildings where there is minimal or no risk to life.

Where a dangerous substance is present in the relevant premises, the fire risk assessment shall be carried out in line with Regulation 6 and Regulation 11 of The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010. Fire Safety related measures arising from these and any other risk assessments must be implemented.

Items arising from the FRAs will be assigned to the following for action:

* Local Management (Items such as housekeeping, weekly fire alarm test, doors wedged open, equipment blocking doorways, storage of materials, fire safety log book, and arranging fire drills.)
* Estate Services (Items requiring minor maintenance, such as repairs to binding doors, periodic testing of fire alarms and emergency lighting, missing smoke seals, single fire door replacements.)
* Estates Development (Items of a major nature such as new fire alarm systems, emergency lighting, structural alterations, fire stopping and compartmentation, new escape routes.)
* Estates Fire safety Team (Items such as arranging maintenance of fire extinguishers, policy matters, signage, new extinguishers, etc.).

All FRA actions will be prioritised as follows:

A. Serious breach of legislation, having the potential for serious injury to occupants. Also, minor housekeeping or maintenance items that can readily receive attention without delay.

B. Matter that presents a threat to the safety of occupants, but not considered to constitute serious risk.

C. Matter that is considered to constitute bad practice, but may not present a threat to occupants.

6.2 Fire Safety Systems Maintenance

All fire safety precautions must be maintained in effective working condition and in compliance with the applicable and current legislation. Planned maintenance will be carried out by the Estates Directorate on this equipment.

6.3 Multiple Occupancy Premises (and those with low management levels)

For multiple-occupancy premises, Schools and Directorates must collaborate to ensure co-ordinated arrangements are in place for fire safety. Collaboration may be achieved through an Accommodation and Safety Liaison Committee or a Health and Safety Committee.

For premises where there is a low level of management, e.g. learning and teaching facilities, the Estates Directorate will ensure that fire safety measures are maintained to the necessary standard.

Managers should consult the Estates Manager / Assistant Estates Manager (Fire Safety) for guidance and assistance regarding all Fire Safety precautions.

Where a third party tenancy occupies part of the University premises they should adhere to all relevant requirements of the QUB Fire Safety Policy.

6.4 Fire Safety Management System (FSMS)

Heads of School/Directors must ensure that Premises Fire Officers (PFOs) are appointed to manage fire safety locally on their behalf for all premises under their control, including the completion and recording of appliciable routine fire safety checks.

PFOs are responsible for carrying out and recording of routine fire safety checks and reporting any defects as appropriate.

For larger premises Fire Wardens (FW) may also be appointed from the School or Directorates existing staff to assist the PFO.

Routine fire safety checks required varies per building and can include weekly fire alarm, detector, fire exit and fire escape, and also monthly fire extinguisher, disabled refuge system, fire door and door release checks.

All routine checks are recorded on the University’s online FSMS and this system allows all aspects of fire safety to be managed and records maintained in compliance with applicable and current legislation.

Access to the FSMS has been provided to all University premises and is accessed through an individual account set up for each PFO or FW.

Training and support on carrying out fire safety checks or using the FSMS is provided by the Estates Manager / Assistant Estates Manager (Fire Safety).

The FSMS will automatically notify a PFO or FW via email when they have a check due to be completed or if a check has not been complete, this will continue until it has been completed.

Any defects that are identified during the routine fire safety checks should be reported immediadly to the Estates Helpdesk via a Building Liason Officer on the Planon system.

6.5 Fire Evacuation Plans

Heads of School/Directors must ensure that a Fire Evacuation Plan has been completed and an adequate number of staff are appointed to assist in fire evacuations for all premises under his or her control.

Local management must ensure that a Fire Evacuation Plan and Premises Fire Warden Sweep Checklist is in place and kept up-to-date for each premises under their control, the extent of the plan will vary according to the size and complexity of the premises. Plans must provide for the nomination of an Evacuation Control Team, and include written instructions on evacuation of the premises/workplace in the event of a fire where necessary.

NB: documented Fire Evacuation Plans may not be required in smaller premises where the N1 Fire Action Notice (displayed adjacent to Fire Alarm Manual Call Points) is suffice.

An example of a typical Evacuation Control Team Structure is as follows:

Evacuation Officer

Evacuation Officer

Evacuation Officer

Evacuation Officer

Emergency Services

Fire Safety Managers & other relevant advisors

Security and/or Porters

Evacuation Controller

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

Fire Warden

The EC has responsibility for managing the Evacuation Control Team and controlling the evacuation and brief the Emergency Services on their arrival.

The EO have responsibility for gathering information from their respective Fire Wardens regarding the state of evacuation in each warden’s assigned area. They have an additional responsibility to collate this information and pass it on to the Evacuation Controller.

The Fire Wardens have responsibility for “sweeping the premises” etc. with due care, while not placing themselves in danger. They should be familiar with their designated areas and associated escape routes. During an evacuation, they should keep the Evacuation Officers apprised of progress.

6.6 Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

A PEEP is a bespoke 'evacuation plan' for individuals who may not be able to reach an ultimate place of safety unaided or within a satisfactory period of time in the event of any emergency.

This will also provide the schools/departments concerned with the necessary information so as to ensure that the correct level of assistance is always available.

 PEEPs may be required for individuals with:

• Mobility impairments

• Sight impairments

• Hearing impairments

• Cognitive impairments

• Other circumstances

The underlying question in deciding whether a PEEP is necessary is "can you evacuate the building unaided, in a prompt manner, during an emergency situation?" If the answer is "no", then it is likely that a PEEP is needed.

The Diversity and Inclusion Unit or Disability Services manage the PEEP process for Staff and Students respectively.

6.7 Hot Work

Hot work must always be carried out and authorised by competent personnel in accordance with the University’s Safety Document Management System. This includes any work which may produce sufficient heat to cause ignition of surrounding materials but not routine laboratory or workshop procedures which are the subject of a risk assessment.

6.8 Training

Heads of School/Directors must ensure that all staff receive fire safety training on induction and subsequently training on an annual basis. This can provided either via online fire safety training on the ‘Queen’s Online’ internet page or by ‘face to face’ training for staff that do not have access to work stations.

Heads of School/Directors must also nominate and ensure that appropriate numbers of staff are trained as Fire Wardens.

Heads of School/Directors must also nominate and ensure that appropriate numbers of staff are trained in the operation of firefighting equipment (FFE).

As recommended in The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010, taking into account the size of, and the specific hazards involved in, the relevant premises concerned, training in the use of FFE is provided to:

* All QUB Security Staff as they provide emergency response to fire incidents across the University Estate;
* Staff in high risk laboratories and workshops;
* Catering Staff;
* Staff in Belfast City Council Licenced Premises;
* Any premises outside of the above, which specifically request training in the use of FFE.

6.9 Emergency Information

In an emergency inform Queen’s University Security Control Room at extension 2222, giving them any relevant information, i.e. address, location within the premises, type of emergency and details of any persons in immediate danger.

*NB: Different local arrangements are in place for the Marine Research Facility in Portaferry – the emergency telephone number for public emergency services is 999*

6.10 Portable Electrical Heaters

Portable electrical heaters are only permitted in the University if there are issues with the premises existing heating system or when staff are working outside of normal working hours and the installed heating system does not operates during these hours. Temporary portable oil filled heaters can be obtained from the Estates Directorate in the event of a problem with the installed heating system. LPG naked flame or exposed element heaters such as radiant bar or fan heaters should never be used.  If heaters are required in emergencies, staff must ensure:

* Nothing is placed directly on top of or close to the heaters;
* Heaters are not switched on for long periods if the room is unoccupied;
* Heaters are not left on overnight.

6.11 Refrigerator / Freezer Appliances

Before purchasing or bringing a refrigerator, fridge-freezer or freezer appliance into University premises, the model must be checked by staff using an online product recall checker (website) and if there are any previously identified issues with proposed model it must not be purchased. Staff should also check what the backing is made from, a non-combustible material such as metal is acceptable, and plastic backed appliances must not be purchased. Domestic type appliances must not be used for storing chemicals, flammable or dangerous substances and materials. Intrinsically safe and/or explosion proof appliances may be required for laboratory areas for storing such substances and materials.

Domestic and laboratory fridge, fridge-freezer or freezer appliances must not be located for use in any escape routes or circulation spaces and also must not be located directly adjacent to heat producing equipment such as cookers or radiators, and preferably located away from direct sunlight, as these will result in the appliance having to work harder to maintain the required internal temperature. When setting up the appliance, always ensure that the area you are locating the appliance is free of paper or other flammable materials, and ensure there is enough room behind the appliance for air to circulate freely. The interior or exterior ventilation openings of the appliance must not be obstructed. The mains cable must not be trapped beneath the appliance when putting it in position.

Staff should monitor and check all existing domestic and laboratory fridge, fridge-freezer or freezer appliances for any signs of electrical damage, overheating or sounds of ‘arcing’ (buzzing or crackling).

Regular routine visual checks should be completed around all sides existing appliances to ensure there is no build up of dust or debris, and this should be removed accordingly.

The appliance’s condenser coil and fan should be periodically inspected and cleaned.

1. Equality and Diversity Statement

The Policy has been drawn up and reviewed in light of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) which requires the University to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. It has been screened to identify adverse impact on the nine equality categories and will be subject to ongoing screening.

1. Consultation

Consultation for the formulation of this policy involved the following groups and individiuals:

* Director of Estates
* Estates Senior Management Team
* Where appliciable, external stakeholders
1. Relevant legislation and National Guidance

The Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006

The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010

The Building Regulations (NI) 2000 Technical Booklet E - Fire Safety June 2005

BS 9999:2008 Code of practice for fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings

BS 9991:2011 Fire safety in the design, management and use of residential buildings

BS 5839-1:2013 Fire detection and fire alarm systems for nondomestic premises buildings

Northern Ireland Housing Executive: HMO Fire Safety Guide

1. Implementation and Monitoring Plans

Schools/Directorates must monitor the compliance of their units with the Fire Safety Policy and take appropriate action where necessary.

The Estates Manager / Assistant Estates Manager (Fire Safety), in conjunction with the Safety Service, will ensure that fire safety arrangements are audited on a periodic basis.

Records of risk assessment, instruction and training, maintenance etc., must be made available to external auditors including the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.

Records of routine fire safety checks can be downloaded for inspection by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service at a statutory audit.

The performance of PFOs / FWs on the FSMS is continually monitored by the Estates Manager / Assistant Estates Manager (Fire Safety) by generating progress reports. If requested this information is available to applicable Heads of Schools / Directors.

The performance of all university staff completing annual Fire Safety Awareness Training is continually monitored by the Estates Manager / Assistant Estates Manager (Fire Safety) by generating progress reports. If requested this information is available to applicable Heads of Schools / Directors.

1. References

Fire & Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006

Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010

Further Advice

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QUB Fire Safety:

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/EstatesDirectorate/Services/FireSafety/>

NIFRS Fire Safe:

<https://www.nifrs.org/firesafe/>

Gov.uk Fire safety in the workplace:

<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities>

Document Change Log

The following changes have been made as part of the initial consultation and formulation of the Policy.

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