



Open University

Heating and Cooling Policy

Estates / June 2026

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Heating and Cooling Policy

Reason for the Policy

Providing a comfortable working temperature for building occupants is important to the University but this has to be balanced against the University's energy consumption and the environmental consequences of heating and cooling spaces. Recent international reports have highlighted the severity of the climate crisis and public awareness of sustainability and carbon emissions is increasing. This policy will help colleagues to understand our heating and cooling strategy and how this supports both the OU's strategic carbon reduction agenda and its financial sustainability.

Scope

This policy covers all Open University properties located at Walton Hall, Wellingborough, Manchester, Nottingham and the Nations offices in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh.

Legal Requirements

The workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992 and the associated code of practice states that:

'During working hours a reasonable internal temperature must be maintained and this must not be less than 16°C unless the work involves severe physical effort in which case the temperature can be lowered to no less than 13°C.'

Working hours are defined as Monday to Friday, 08.00 – 17:30 (unless otherwise

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agreed with Events, Faculty, Unit or Building managers), excluding Bank Holidays and University closure days.

Heating Policy

The University endeavours to maintain working time space temperatures of **19°C – 21°C** in all buildings.

The heating systems will be turned on in early autumn (typically October) and turned off in early summer (typically May), depending on the weather conditions and geographical location.

The majority of OU occupied buildings are controlled via the Building Management System, which monitors both internal and external temperatures. The BMS system is monitored centrally within the Estates office.

Out of hours heating will be provided to offices and centrally bookable spaces when they are in use – Estates Liaison Line need to be contacted to enable the BMS settings to be changed.

Specialist Buildings or Spaces will be set up and controlled within the parameters requested by End Users and agreed with Estates.

Portable heaters may **not** be used without explicit consent from Estates.

Cooling Policy

Cooling is not standard throughout the OU estate.

Cooling will only be provided in areas where it is critical to control temperature for functional or regulatory reasons (i.e. Laboratories), process driven purposes (i.e. Data Centres/Network Comms Rooms/Specialist Research Equipment), and

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areas with significant heat gain that cannot be mitigated by other means (i.e. Lecture Theatres).

Some OU buildings have a combined ventilation, heating and cooling system and these are controlled by the BMS system.

Portable air conditioning units may **not** be used without explicit consent from Estates.

Portable Heaters

Portable heaters may not be used without explicit consent from Estates.

Only heaters supplied by Estates can be used.

Faculties and Units must **not** purchase their own heaters.

If supplementary heating is needed, colleagues should contact the Estates Liaison Line.

Equalities and Reasonable Adjustment

Thermal comfort is a very subjective matter. There may be instances where the heating policy does not meet an individual's personal circumstances, particularly where it may relate to a health problem.

Whilst we anticipate that the guidance outlined in this policy will prove effective in both keeping colleagues comfortable and reducing our energy costs, we are aware that some colleagues may need a reasonable adjustment.

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Should any colleague feel that the mitigations in place are not sufficient for their needs, they should, in the first instance, discuss this with their line manager who will support them in determining any additional appropriate measures. Should colleagues not feel comfortable doing so, they may also wish to reach out to People Services or Occupational Health.

If a reasonable adjustment is needed, this should be requested by their Line Manager through Estates Liaison Line.

What you can do to help

- Take reasonable measures to retain heat within buildings in cold weather by closing windows and doors when appropriate.
- Ensure locally controlled heating and cooling is switched off when not needed or when leaving a room.
- Ensure radiators and grilles are not blocked with furniture, clothing or other items which might prevent the heating or cooling system from operating effectively.
- Colleagues not permitted to use their own heaters
- Wear suitable clothing in hot or cold weather.

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Reporting Issues

Report heating or cooling problems to the Estates Liaison Line:

Email: [Estates-Liaison](#)

Call Ext. [51000](#) or [01908 653286](#)

[Log a request](#)

Or

Out of Hours please contact:

Email: [Security](#)

Call Ext. [53666](#) or [01908 653666](#)

Version History

Version Number	Date of change	Originator of change (title)	Description of change
1.0	May 2025	Estates	New Heating & Cooling Policy
1.1	June 2026	Head of Infrastructure	Review of policy – no change

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