



Open University

Portable Heater Policy

Estates / June 2026

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Portable Heater Policy

Reason for the Policy

The Open University's energy and environmental policies commit to minimising consumption of resources and reducing environmental impact. Our goal is to create a safe, comfortable, and sustainable workplace for everyone. While portable heaters may seem like a quick fix for cold days, they can introduce safety risks, increase energy costs, and work against our environmental commitments. By avoiding their use, we help maintain consistent temperatures, reduce unnecessary energy consumption, and support our shared sustainability goals.

Scope

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

Safety

Hazards from portable electric heaters include:

- Electric shocks if insulation has been damaged.
- Fire from overloading of local electricity circuit, overheating of unwound cables and mechanical damage
- Fire from placing heaters and flammables in close proximity
- Trips and falls over insulating cable
- Direct skin burns from heaters

Temperature sensors control heating in buildings. The use of portable electric heaters near to a sensor interferes with the heating control system and will indicate that the desired temperature has been reached when it has not. This may switch off the heating to a whole floor or a whole building.

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Policy

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 the main Heating and Cooling 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.

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.

Safety Precautions

The portable electrical heater/s must be:

- maximum rating of 2 KW fitted with an overheat safety thermostat with thermal cut-out
- portable appliance test (PAT) before first use and at periodic intervals thereafter.

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- Inspected before use for damage to casing, cable or plug. Never operate a defective heater.
- Placed the heater on a level surface for stability.

The user must not:

- use an electric heater as a dryer by placing clothing over it and never use it as a heater to thaw items. Keep things that burn away from electric heaters.
- place the heater where children might play near it or where people might trip over or bump into it.
- run the heater's cord (or any cord) under rugs or carpeting.
- leave the heater operating unattended.

To prevent electrical shocks and electrocutions, always keep portable electric heaters away from water and never touch an electric heater if you are wet. Avoid using extension cords with space heaters.

A portable heater can only be provided and installed by a member of the Estates Team.

Reporting Issues

Report heating or cooling problems to the Estates Liaison Line:

Email: [Estates-Liaison](#)

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

[Log a request](#)

Out of Hours please contact:

Email: [Security](#)

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

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Version History

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

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