

Food Safety – An introduction to legislation for University Premises

Introduction

Food hygiene is the practice of handling, preparing, cooking, and storing food in ways that prevent contamination and foodborne illness. It ensures that food remains safe to consume, protecting both public health and businesses that serve food.

Food hygiene is important because it:

- Protects public health and prevents outbreaks of illness.
- Ensures compliance with national and international regulations.
- Builds trust and confidence in food businesses.
- Encourages sustainable and responsible food practices.

Legislation

Food hygiene legislation sets the legal framework to ensure that food served and sold is not harmful, not misleadingly described and is safe for human consumption. It requires food businesses to follow strict standards in handling, preparing, cooking, and storing food, with enforcement by local authorities.

Food business registration with the local authority

University premises providing catering on a regular basis may be considered a food business and therefore will need to be registered with the local authority Environmental Health department. This can be done online at [Register a Food Business](#) A food business is defined as: any undertaking, whether for profit or not, and whether public or private, carrying out of any of the activities related to any stage of production, processing and sale of food.

Food Safety Management System (HACCP)

Anyone providing food as part of a business must put in place food safety management procedures based on the principles of HACCP. HACCP is a system that helps identify potential food hazards and introduces procedures to make sure those hazards are removed or reduced to an acceptable level. These procedures help to ensure food is safe to eat providing that up-to-date documents and records relating to procedures are kept, they reflect the practices in place, and they are regularly reviewed and updated.

Requirements for food premises

Work surfaces, walls, floors, and ceilings must be in good condition, non-absorbent and be capable of being effectively cleaned and disinfected. The premises must be well lit, have adequate ventilation and have well maintained drainage.

All **windows and doors** in the catering area must be in good condition, be easy to clean and disinfect and, if they open externally, be kept closed or fitted with insect-proof screens to minimise the ingress of pests.

Equipment: All articles, fittings, and equipment with which food comes into contact must be kept in good order, repair and condition and be effectively cleaned and be disinfected at a frequency sufficient to avoid any risk of contamination.

There must be sufficient **wash hand basins**, designated specifically for hand washing, supplied with hot and cold (or mixed) running water, liquid soap, and disposable towels for drying hands.

Adequate facilities for the **cleaning and disinfection of equipment** must be provided. The facilities must have an adequate supply of hot and cold water. The provision and use of a dishwasher is advisable.

Facilities for **washing food** must be provided in the food preparation area, where necessary. An adequate supply of hot and/or cold potable water must be provided. This sink should be in addition to the equipment washing up sink.

Suitable and sufficient **internal and external bins** for storage of food waste and rubbish with systems in place for its removal must be provided.

A supply of **potable (drinking) water** must be provided.

Toilets are considered dirty areas and must not open directly into a room where food is handled.

Adequate **changing facilities** must be provided for anyone working in the food business to change their clothes, where necessary.

Where both raw and ready-to-eat food are handled there must be controls in place to prevent the risk of cross contamination e.g. segregation of tasks, separate equipment, separate preparation areas.

Food handlers

Persons who regularly prepare or handle food, even if it is not part of their main duties, must be supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene. The level of training required is dependent on the role of the individual and the types of food involved. For further information on food hygiene training please refer to Food Safety Information leaflet number 4.

Everyone working with food or within the food handling area must be in good health; maintain a high standard of personal cleanliness and wear suitable, clean and, where appropriate, protective clothing.

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Food handlers must report symptoms of food poisoning, such as diarrhoea, vomiting or stomach pains to their manager and must be excluded from working with food.

For further information on personal hygiene requirements please refer to Food Safety Information leaflet number 8.

Temperature Control

Temperature control plays a fundamental role in preventing the proliferation of microorganisms that can cause foodborne illnesses.

High-risk foods such as dairy products, cooked meat and poultry, shellfish, stews, smoked salmon, cooked rice, sandwiches, sushi, pate, salads, cooked sliced meats, soups, cheesecake, meat gravy, eggs, etc. must always be stored at a safe temperature.

Legislation states that foods that require temperature control must be kept at:

Hot above 63°C or Cold below 8°C

Note: it is important to check storage instructions on packaging as many food manufacturers state lower temperatures and these directions must be adhered to.

Food may be kept outside these temperatures during service for a limited single period as follows:

Cold food may be held at ambient temperatures for service or on display for sale for a single period of up to four hours. After this time, it must be placed back in the fridge and served at a chilled temperature or disposed of. This is for one single period only.

Note: a single limited period of up to 2 hours outside temperature control is unlikely to be questioned. However, for longer periods, justification and food safety management procedures based on the HACCP principles will be required. Furthermore, a documented system will need to be devised so that products are not displayed for more than 4 hours.

Hot foods must be kept hot (above 63°C) or eaten within 2 hours, after this time it must be disposed of.

Breach of food safety and food hygiene regulations

Offences carry unlimited fines and/or 2 years' custody OR unlimited fines and/or 6 months' custody dependant on the offence. It is not only the caterer that can be prosecuted for a breach of food safety but also the University and/or individuals responsible for providing the food.

Food Safety Information. Number 1

Further Information

On the Food Standards Agency website www.food.gov.uk

In other leaflets in the food safety information series

From Nick White, Head of University Catering or Jenny Clare, Food Safety Compliance Manager