Driving College Minibuses, Vans and Pool Cars SOP

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Head of Estates, Facilities and Health & Safety

Summary of Contents
This document sets out the requirements for driving College minibuses, vans and SMART car, and procedures for booking transport

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1.0 Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix 1 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, you can click here to view the change history.

2.0 Purpose

2.1 SERC is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to ensure the health, welfare and safety of those travelling in a college minibus, van, SMART car or pool car. It is important that minibus drivers not only receive appropriate training but that they are also aware of their responsibilities in respect of their passengers and the day-to-day maintenance of the vehicle.

2.2 This document sets out the minimum requirements that drivers of college minibuses, vans, SMART car or pool cars must comply with before they are permitted to use it.

3.0 Scope

3.1 "Minibus" is defined as “A motor vehicle which has been constructed or adapted to carry more than 8 but not more than 16 passengers in addition to the driver”.

3.2 These procedures apply to all SERC minibuses, vans, SMART car, pool cars and SERC staff.

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Suitable Personnel

Only authorised drivers are permitted to drive college minibuses, vans, SMART car and pool cars.

When driving a college minibus, van, SMART car or pool car the following conditions must be met:

- The vehicle is used for social purposes by a non-commercial body but not for hire or reward.
- The driver is aged at least 21.
- The driver has held a car (category B) licence for at least 2 years.
- The driver has a D1 (with Test) classified licence (not required for vans, SMART car or pool cars).
- The driver has proof of specialised training e.g. Certificate of Professional Competence - CPC to obtain Driver Qualification Card (not required for vans, SMART car or pool cars
- The driver should have attended, at least, 1-day emergency first aid training unless agreed otherwise by the HR Unit.
- The minibus maximum weight is not more than 3.5 tonnes (excluding any specialist equipment for the carriage of passengers with disabilities) and 4.25 tonnes otherwise.
- The minibus may not be driven outside the United Kingdom or Ireland without written confirmation from the Allocated Estates Person (AEP) who will check the relevant insurance cover is in place.
- Drivers should have no more than a maximum of 3 penalty points. College insurers will require notification of any persons wishing to drive with more than 3 penalty points and will need details as to the nature of the offences.

Photocard licence renewal. Drivers will be required to renew their photocard driving licence every 10 years. The relevant Government Department will issue them with a reminder when the photocard driving licence is due for renewal.

A list of all drivers authorised to drive college minibuses will be held by the Learning Academy.

All authorised drivers must provide the HR department with a copy of a current valid driving licence. On an annual basis all drivers must complete a Drivers Declaration form to conform to the conditions within this document and this is a requirement of the college insurers.

Drivers who do not comply with the above will not be added to the list and those on the list who fail to provide updated information will be removed from the list.

Drivers receiving more than 3 penalty points on their licence must inform the HR Department immediately who will update their records accordingly and inform the Estates Unit. Persons receiving more than 3 penalty points may have the right to drive a college vehicle terminated. College insurers will be advised of anyone wishing to drive with more than 3 penalty points.

Drivers must be medically fit to drive. The HR Unit must be informed of any change in medical condition that may affect a driver's ability to drive a college vehicle. Such changes should be notified to the College without delay. The College may refer a driver to the College Occupational Health Provider if deemed necessary.

Drivers who have had relevant changes to their licence conditions must advise the HR Unit prior to driving any SERC vehicle. The HR Unit should be contacted in the first instance for clarification if a driver has any doubts in relation to driving a college vehicle.

Drivers may also contact the DVA for advice in relation to medical conditions or any other matter potentially effecting their ability to drive.

4.2 Medicines, Illicit Drugs, Distractions, Mobile Phones

Drivers must not drive if they feel excessively tired or unwell or are receiving any medical treatment during which they are advised against driving.

Drivers must never drink and drive and should be aware that alcohol can remain in the body for up to 24 hours.

As well as being illegal, taking illicit drugs can seriously affect a driver's judgement and abilities. Many drugs remain in the body for much longer periods than alcohol. Drivers must never drive if under the influence of drugs.

College employees must not use a handheld mobile phone when driving. The phone should be switched off /made silent when entering the vehicle and not used until the vehicle is parked in a safe location.

4.3 Training

No member of staff is permitted to drive a college minibus unless they have obtained a current valid Driver Qualification Card, and the Learning Academy must hold a copy of updated cards.

4.4 Estates Unit Drivers

The Estates Unit has two directly employed drivers who provide various services such as regular courier runs and bespoke transportation of students/equipment etc. between campuses. When not engaged in these duties the drivers will be available for general driving duties. A request for a driver should be made using the online driver request spreadsheet. All staff have the facility to read the spreadsheet but only a limited number of staff can edit it,

these include Assistant Heads of School and School Support Officers. Requests should be submitted at least 7 days in advance of the journey. **Given the limited resources available, the submission of a request is no guarantee that a driver will be available.**

It should be noted that if an Estates Unit Driver is required to work overtime, then the School/Unit requesting the Estates driver will need to confirm in writing that such overtime costs will be borne by that School/Unit.

The Estates Unit must be notified immediately if a driving request has been cancelled. Failure to notify the Estates Unit of such a cancellation may result in the School/Unit being charged accordingly.

4.5 College Vehicles

All college vehicles used on public roads must by law:

- Have a valid PSV / MOT certificate (as applicable)
- Be correctly insured.
- Have relevant vehicle tax.

If the driver of any college vehicle is unsure of the above requirements, then the vehicle should not be driven, and the AEP contacted for confirmation.

All college vehicles must be regularly checked for defects.

- Drivers must check their vehicles prior to driving to ensure they are free from defects (as per CPC training). If defects are found, then these should be reported to the AEP immediately. Under no circumstances should vehicles deemed to be unroadworthy be driven.
- Weekly checks should be carried out by the AEP and records kept. Small routine maintenance operations such as changing a bulb or wiper blades, checking and adjusting tyre pressure are to be undertaken by drivers operating the vehicles. Training will be provided if the driver is not competent to do so.

4.6 Insurance of College Vehicles

All college vehicles are insured under Fleet cover. A copy of the certificate can be found in the Estates intranet site under Policies – Insurance. Any queries with regards vehicle insurance should be forwarded to the AEP in the first instance.

4.7 Servicing

The Estates Unit is responsible for ensuring servicing is carried out to all minibuses, vans, SMART car and pool cars (with the exception of those vehicles used by Motor Vehicle Department). This is in addition to the driver's pre-journey checks.

4.8 PSV / MOT Testing

- A commercial vehicle (minibus or van) requires a PSV test after 1 year.
- A car requires an MOT test if more than 4 years old.
- The Estates Unit is responsible for ensuring PSV certification of all minibuses, vans and SMART car (with the exception of those vehicles used by Motor Vehicle Department).

4.9 Records

The following records must be kept:

- Mileage records
- All documents relating to the vehicle
- Operating log, including booking the vehicle in and out, faults reported and rectified
- List of authorised drivers
- Training and re-training forms
- Contact names and details (including out-of-hours details)
- Week maintenance/safety check sheets
- Maintenance records

4.10 Booking a Minibus including Estates Driver / Booking an Estates vehicle **excluding** Estates Driver

Minibuses including an Estates Driver can be booked as per section 4.4 above.

Estates vehicles **excluding** an Estates Driver i.e. driver provided by School/Unit, can only be driven by suitably qualified SERC Staff as per section 4.1 above. To book an Estates Vehicle you must use the Service Desk App, select Estates, request work, book an Estates vehicle without driver and the Allocated Estates Person (AEP) will advise on status.

In exceptional circumstances vehicles may be taken out of service at short notice. This may be the result of mechanical failure, vandalism, accident damage etc. In such cases the AEP/Estates Unit will notify the relevant School / Unit and advise them to make alternative arrangements.

All Vehicles with the exception of those used solely by the Estates Drivers, should be booked through the Service Desk App. Vehicle Keys will be left at a designated pick-up point for collection and return.

If a vehicle (or driver) is not available, it is the responsibility of the School/Unit to make alternative arrangements. This may include the hiring of external resources which must be procured as per college procurement procedures. If there is any doubt about procuring an external resource procurement@serc.ac.uk must be contacted prior to an order being placed.

4.11 Allocated Estates Person (AEP) Responsibility

The AEP shall ensure that vehicles with Estates listed as the responsible owner shall:

- Have appropriate insurance
- Have relevant PSV/MOT documentation.
- Have relevant vehicle tax.
- Be regularly serviced and records kept.
- Be kept in a roadworthy condition and that regular checks are carried out with records kept.

- Weekly Inspection sheets are reviewed and actioned as appropriate.
- The list of authorised drivers is regularly updated and added to and deleted from as appropriate.
- Minibuses are kept clean and free from rubbish.
- Liaise with insurance companies and other statutory bodies as required.
- Keep all vehicle documentation such as service records, tax books etc.
- Liaise with the Learning Academy in relation to training.
- Ensure Driver Declaration forms are renewed and up to date as appropriate.
- Keep records in relation to mileage, vehicle running costs etc.
- Keep spare keys.
- Vehicle recovery facility is in place.
- Carryout audits in relation to college vehicles.
- Update Motor Insurance Database (MID) as required by college insurer.

4.12 Learning Academy Responsibility

- To keep driver licence details of current drivers.
- To organise appropriate CPC training and keep a record of same.
- To confirm to the AEP when training has been successfully completed.
- To update AEP with current qualified drivers list (at least monthly).
- To advise the AEP as soon as possible of persons who are no longer qualified to drive college vehicles.

4.13 Driver Responsibility

Drivers are ultimately responsible for the decision to drive a college vehicle. Drivers will never be asked to drive a vehicle with defects.

Drivers are responsible for ensuring vehicle checks are carried out and that all appropriate documentation is correctly completed prior to driving the vehicle. If defects are found, then the AEP should be notified immediately. If the vehicle is not roadworthy then it must not be driven. An alternative vehicle should be sourced. This may be a SERC vehicle, or one provided by a third party. Third party vehicles will need to be procured in line with college procurement procedures.

Before any journey, and every time a college vehicle is used, the driver must:

- Plan the journey so that it can be completed safely and comfortably in accordance with the passengers needs
- Ensure the vehicle is suitable for the passengers being carried
- Ensure that all relevant checks have been carried out and that no obvious defects are apparent before the vehicle is driven. This should be recorded in the relevant documentation provided.
- Ensure all equipment, luggage is safely stored.

Drivers should ensure they have a mobile phone with them, for use in cases of emergency and /or breakdown. These should not be used whilst driving the vehicle.

All Drivers must record the vehicle mileage when obtaining fuel via the fuel card.

When carrying young people it may be necessary for an additional adult to help supervise the passengers as the driver cannot be expected to drive and supervise. However, where such passengers are generally of a responsible nature, such that their safety is unlikely to be in jeopardy, an additional adult is not necessary.

It is the driver's responsibility to log all vehicle defects and advise the AEP via the Service Desk app. as soon as possible so repairs can be carried out.

Drivers must also ensure that all items of rubbish must be removed from the vehicle upon completion of the journey.

Drivers should note that when parking a suitable parking space should be used – any fines arising from poor/illegally parked vehicles will be borne by the driver and not the College.

Drivers who do not comply with suitable standards of driving e.g. speed limits, and who receive fines from statutory authorities as a result of failing to meet such standards, will be personally liable for payment of same.

4.14 Drivers' Hours

Driving a vehicle can be tiring and stressful; therefore, any person driving a college vehicle should not drive for more than 4 ½ hours without taking a break of at least 45 minutes.

4.15 Passenger Care

Drivers must make certain that all passengers have boarded, are safely seated and are wearing properly adjusted seat belts, before moving off.

The doors must be properly closed, but not locked, before the driver moves off.

At the end of a journey, they must make sure that all passengers have left the vehicle and are clear of the doors before moving off.

Drivers should only use suitable, agreed drop off points.

They should ensure that passengers do not exit from doors opening into traffic.

4.16 Seat Belts

It is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that passengers under the age of 14 years always wear seat belts. In the case of older passengers, the driver should ensure as far as they are able, that their passengers actually wear the seat belts provided.

4.17 Risk Assessment

Prior to the trip, risk assessments must be completed. These must take account potential weather conditions.

4.18 What to do in the event of an accident or vehicle breakdown

- The hazard warning lights should be immediately activated.
- The driver should try to move the vehicle off the carriageway (onto the verge or the hard shoulder of a motorway).

- The driver should put on the high-visibility jacket or waistcoat provided and evacuate the passengers from the minibus, in order to remove them to a safe distance away from the minibus and the traffic. (N.B. On motorways, passengers should be taken off the hard shoulder onto the grass embankment and as far from the traffic as is practicable).

IMPORTANT – IN THE CASE OF A MINIBUS FIRE, everyone should be immediately evacuated and moved as far away from the vehicle as possible. The driver should NEVER attempt to tackle an under-bonnet engine fire. The fire extinguisher is provided to deal with cabin fires and thereby secure the safe evacuation of all passengers.

The driver should then:

- In case of an accident, telephone the police, who will inform the other emergency services where necessary. It is a legal requirement that vehicular accidents are reported to the nearest police station within 24 hours. (N.B. The police should also immediately be called where children and/or passengers with severe mobility problems are present. On motorways, the number on the small marker posts at the edge of the hard shoulder will pinpoint to the police the minibus's location).
- Should a minibus breakdown, telephone the breakdown service (details in vehicle) and advise of the location of the breakdown (it may also be necessary to inform the police that the minibus has broken down and may be obstructing a highway).
- Telephone the nominated contact person back at the College in order to inform them what has happened, to enable them to relay messages to those awaiting the arrival of the minibus and parents and/or next of kin, as necessary.
- Contact the AEP to advise that there has been a problem.
- Remain at the scene of the accident or breakdown until the arrival of the police and/or other emergency or breakdown services.
- Complete a College Incident/Accident Report online and forward to the College and forward to the College Health and Safety Manager.

4.19 Important points to note in the event of a road traffic accident

- Where there are injured passengers and/or pedestrians, they should not be moved unless they are in immediate danger of further injury from other vehicles or from fire or explosion.
- Where the accident is damage to the vehicle only with no one injured, the driver must ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy before continuing the journey. (N.B. Advice on this matter may need to be sought from the breakdown service and/or the police, depending on the extent of the damage sustained).
- Where the minibus has broken down or crashed round a bend in the road concealing it from on-coming traffic, the driver or his/her escort should, wherever possible and always wearing the high-visibility jacket or waistcoat, walk back along the road in order to warn/flag down the on-coming traffic. A reflective hazard-warning triangle should also be erected by the roadside/on the hard shoulder.

4.20 Towing

The vehicle handbook (and V5C registration certificate) will confirm the maximum weight of any trailer that may be towed. The college vehicles (Ford Transit minibuses with towbars) can tow a mass of 1550kg (braked) or 750kg unbraked. Any trailers exceeding these limits will not be deemed road legal and will not be covered by college insurance.

A vehicle with a GVW of 3500kg or lower is restricted as to the size of trailer it may tow. The trailer can be a maximum of 7m long by 2.55m wide. (A heavier vehicle can tow a trailer of maximum 12m long by 2.55m wide). Exceptionally, where the trailer is specially designed to carry long loads (e.g. one or more boats etc.), the 7m limit does not apply.

The AEP should be contacted in relation to any queries.

4.21 Use of college vehicles

College vehicles can only be used for official college business i.e. not for private / personnel use. Any requests for the use of a college vehicle not directly associated with college business must have written permission from a member of the College Management Team. This must be forwarded to the AEP prior to use of the vehicle to ensure that appropriate insurance cover is in place.

5.0 Responsible Owner

5.1 Head of Estates, Facilities and Health & Safety - however, individuals issuing minibus keys will be responsible for ensuring that relevant criteria is complied with. The Learning Academy will be responsible for appropriate training.

6.0 Communication Plan

This Procedure will be uploaded to the College intranet and referred to in staff induction and training.

7.0 Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually, or when the need for change has been identified.

Appendix 1: Document Change History

Version	Date	Change Detail
1.0	December 2023	Reviewed - Minor responsibility & booking vehicles clarifications. Review date amended.
1.1	January 2024	Transferred to new Accessibility Template
1.2	January 2025	Section 4.1 amended to reflect HR Departments driving licence requirements. Section 4.3 updated re. Learning Academy requirements. Responsible owner updated to Head of Estates, Facilities and Health & Safety. Cover sheet updated
1.3	December 2025	Section 4.1 amended to include 1 day first aid training.