General Estates SOP

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Academic Year:
2025/2026 onwards

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Responsible Owner:
Head of Estates, Facilities Management and Health & Safety

Summary of Contents
Procedures for staff and authorised personnel:

- to be provided with a staff identity / access control card.
- to be provided with college keys.
- in the event of a heating system failure.
- in relation to the control of Estates contractors whilst working on SERC premises.

Review Information (Responsible Owner):

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126-04-2014: Authorisation of Staff Identity & Access Control Cards
125-04-2014: Control of College Keys
153-05-2014: Heating Failure
172-12-2014: Control of Estates Contractors

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Date of Last Accessibility Screening:
February 2024

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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 Background

Included in this General Estates SOP are the following procedures:

- Section 4.0 - Authorisation of Staff Identity and Access Control Cards
- Section 5.0 - Control of College Keys
- Section 6.0 - Heating Failure
- Section 7.0 - Control of Estates Contractors
- Section 8.0 – Service Request Process

3.0 Scope

Unless specified in the sections below, these procedures apply to all staff, visitors and contractors when on College premises.

4.0 Authorisation of Staff Identity and Access Control Cards

4.1 All Staff, full-time, part-time or temporary, are required to display a Staff Identity/Access Control Card at all times while working within the college. This should be worn on the lanyard provided.

4.2 The Staff Identity / Access Control Authorisation Form (available on the Estates Team site) must be completed and signed by the Head of Unit or Assistant Head of Unit prior to cards being issued by the Estates Department. **Unauthorised forms will not be accepted.**

4.3 Upon receipt of a completed form to the relevant Estates Office (Lisburn, Downpatrick or Bangor) the staff member will generally have a photograph taken and the image placed on the issued Staff identity / Access Control card. Photographs will not be taken for temporary staff; those on very short-term contracts etc. and in such circumstances a generic card will be issued.

4.4 Access rights will only be granted to relevant areas as authorised by the Head of Unit / Assistant Head of Unit.

4.5 Staff identity / Access Control cards no longer required by Staff members should be returned to the Head of Unit (or Human Resources Unit in exceptional circumstances) and subsequently forwarded to the Estates Department for the amendment of records.

4.6 Staff on temporary contracts will automatically have access rights terminated on the date stipulated by the relevant Head / Assistant Head of Unit in the submitted Staff Identity / Access Control Authorisation Form. The Head of Unit/ Assistant Head will have to confirm any extension in writing.

4.7 The Human Resources Unit will advise the Estates Unit in writing of Staff leaving employment so that the relevant access rights can be terminated.

4.8 Staff identity / Access Control cards may be withdrawn upon approval of:

- Any member of the College Management Team (CMT)
- Head of HR
- HR Manager

4.9 Access control rights may be suspended upon approval from:

- Any member of the College Management Team (CMT)
- Head of HR
- HR Manager

4.10 The Estates Unit will keep records of all Staff identity / Access Control cards issued or returned.

4.11 Staff identity / Access Control Card Holders Responsibilities:

- Card holders must ensure the safe keeping of cards as issued by the College.
- Replacement of lost cards may be subject to a charge.
- Anyone misplacing a card should inform the Estates Unit immediately. This will result in the card access rights being deactivated.
- Staff are **not** permitted to pass cards to other individuals.
- In the event of damage to a card or the magnetic strip becoming ineffective, the card must be returned to the Estates Unit before a new card is issued.

4.12 Contractors' identity cards will be issued by Estates Staff as appropriate.

4.13 Cards No Longer Required

- It is the responsibility of the Head of School/Unit to retrieve Staff Identity/Access Control Cards should the member of staff resign/retire from the college. In the case of part-time staff, it is imperative they are made aware of this procedure and that all cards and lanyards are retrieved by the Head of School/Unit and returned to the Estates Unit at the end of their part-time contract.
- As a security measure, the Estates Unit will automatically de-activate part-time staff cards at the end of June each year.

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5.0 Control of College Keys

This section applies to all staff.

5.1 A Key Authorisation Form must be completed and signed by the Head / Assistant Head of Unit prior to keys being issued by the Estates Unit. **Unauthorised forms will not be accepted.**

5.2 Upon presentation of a completed form to the relevant Estates Office (Lisburn, Downpatrick or Bangor) keys will be issued or placed on order if not readily available. Keys will only be issued to relevant areas as authorised by their Head of Unit / Assistant Head of Unit.

5.3 Keys no longer required by Staff members must be returned to their Head of School/Unit and subsequently forwarded to the Estates Unit for reissue and amendment of records.

5.4 The Estates Unit will keep records of all keys issued or returned.

5.5 Key Holders Responsibilities:

- Key holders must ensure the safe keeping of all keys as issued by the College.
- Replacement of lost keys may be subject to a charge.
- Anyone misplacing a key should inform the Estates Unit immediately.
- Staff are not permitted to pass keys to other individuals.
- No copies of keys should be made (additional keys can be provided by Estates Unit upon request).

5.6 It is the responsibility of the Head of School / Unit to retrieve all keys should the member of staff resign/retire from the College. In the case of part-time staff, it is imperative they are made aware of this procedure and that all keys are retrieved at the end of their contract. These keys must be returned to the Estates Unit as soon as possible.

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6.0 Heating Failure

6.1 In compliance with current legislation and in line with the College's Health & Safety Policy and the risk assessment process, the following provides all staff with guidance and procedures in the event of a heating system failure.

6.2 Although staff have day to day responsibility for safe working practices within the areas under their control, this does not preclude the responsibilities of all staff or students of their legal duties to safe working practices and a safe environment under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978.

6.3 Staff and students have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. To this end, staff and students should correctly use the College's premises in accordance with their training and the instructions they receive.

6.4 This SOP acknowledges the College's duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO) 2005 (as amended) and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 (DDO). However, where there is a conflict between the need to make reasonable adjustments and the duty of care, then Health and Safety will be the priority.

6.5 The General Procedure is to ascertain the extent of the heating failure and to apply the appropriate measures to rectify the fault, supply alternative heating, or mitigate the effects of a lack of heating.

The following procedures should be followed in the event of heating failure:

- In the event of heating failure or perceived coldness in a teaching space, the member of staff must fully report the problem on the Service Desk App. on the College intranet.

- Once the Estates Unit has received the report outlining a heating issue on the Service Desk App, the Deputy Head of Estates and Facilities Management or Facilities Support Manager (Traditional sites - Bangor, Bangor SPACE, Newtownards or Holywood) or Senior Project Manager (PPP sites – Lisburn, Downpatrick, Newcastle, Ballynahinch) will assign the job to Caretakers or Graham Asset Management (GAM).

- The Caretakers / GAM will ascertain if there is a problem and any obvious reason as to why the heating is not functioning such as isolated radiators, boilers tripped, no fuel or pump failure etc. The Caretakers / GAM will attempt to rectify the situation and will report the cause of the failure and any remedial action (if required) to the Deputy Head of Estates and Facilities Management/Facilities Support Manager/Senior Project Manager.

- The Deputy Head of Estates and Facilities Management/Facilities Support Manager /GAM will contact the relevant contractor to request site attendance if required.

- HSE Guidance states, *"The Law does not state a minimum temperature, but the temperature in workrooms should normally be at least 16°C or 13°C if much of the work is physical."* See also the associated ACOP (Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993) which confirms same.

- If it is anticipated that the heating system will be out of action for a considerable period of time (over 2 hours) the Estates Unit/GAM will either provide temporary heating or liaise

with the Timetabling Department to try and relocate the class to an alternative room or facility.

- If temporary heating is found to be inappropriate and no alternative accommodation can be found, then the matter will be passed to the Campus Manager / CMT for consideration and determination. Depending on the severity of the problem, an outcome may be to issue approval to send students home until such times as the heating system has been repaired.

6.6 Temporary Heating

- If it is reported on the Service Desk App that during the period of Heating Failure the classroom or office is below 16°C then, once confirmed, alternative heating will be supplied if available. These will be issued on a first come/first served basis.

- Substitute heaters will remain the property of SERC Estates Unit and must not be removed or relocated to other areas without prior approval.

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7.0 Control of Estates Contractors

7.1 The following procedures apply to SERC Estates staff when managing external contractors and to ensure the health, safety and welfare of SERC building users who may be affected by the work they carry out. It is specific to the Estates function and is not designed to be used by other Departments who may also utilise the services of external contractors.

7.2 SERC also has a duty to protect the contractors by giving them appropriate information about its buildings and its activities which may impact on the work which they are undertaking (e.g. presence of asbestos).

7.3 SERC Estates staff will take all reasonable measures to ensure the work carried out by its contractors will in no way have a detrimental impact upon building users.

7.4 **Newly Appointed Contractors (including Minor Works)**

- AccessNI - Contractors working on SERC properties will have AccessNI clearance, unless otherwise agreed. Contractor representatives will sign a declaration stating this.

- Pre-Contract Meeting – When the SERC Estates Unit first meet with a new contractor, it will be usual for a pre-contract meeting to be held. This meeting will be used to exchange contact details, discuss the scope of the work, specific requirements of both parties, any Health & Safety considerations, Risk Assessments / Method Statements etc. The detail of /information exchanged will be proportionate to the size, scale and complexity of the works.

- Guidelines for Contractors - All new contractors undertaking works which falls outside the Term Service Contract (TSC), will be required to read, understand, sign and communicate to their staff the following document, *Guidelines for Maintenance Contractors Working on SERC Properties.* Only when they have signed and returned this document will the contractor be allowed to work on SERC properties.

7.5 **Contractors on Site (including Reactive and Planned Preventative Maintenance Works)**

- All contractors will operate under the direct control of the Estates Unit and will only undertake works as directed by Estates staff.

- Contractor personnel coming onto SERC properties must have the appropriate AccessNI clearance, unless agreed otherwise in writing.

- All contractor personnel working on SERC property must hold a current Construction Skills Registration (CSR) card or appropriate skills card relevant to their field of service provision. These must be available for inspection upon request as failure to produce may result in the contractor being asked to leave the premises.

- All contractors **must** ensure their employees have the appropriate suitable personal protective equipment, (PPE) for the task in hand.

- When carrying out planned maintenance work, access to SERC properties should be agreed at least 7 DAYS in advance with the appropriate Estates staff. Upon arrival the contractor **must** make a member of Estates Staff aware of their presence (which may be in a separate building to that which requires the works to be completed) and:

- **Ensure they have read the Site Safety Induction and record their presence in the Contractors Site Register.**
- Advise on the work being undertaken.
- Advise the Estates Unit of any special requirements, e.g. rooms to be closed off; and
- Report when work is complete and when they are leaving site.
- **Ensure they record their leaving site in the Contractors Site Register.**

7.5.1 **Before commencing any item of work at any SERC location, contractors must:**

- Upon arrival contractors must report to a member of SERC staff, sign the Contractor Site Register and follow the SERC Estates Department site safety induction procedure.
- Wear suitable PPE at all times.
- Familiarise themselves with their surroundings and create an effective building evacuation plan to be used in the event of a fire.
- Consult the Asbestos Register and take appropriate precautions as necessary.
- Be aware of and operate within the constraints of all current Health and Safety Legislation.
- Have access to risk assessments and method statements were deemed necessary.
- Ensure that all equipment used on site is fully tested and in perfect working order and only used by suitably trained operatives; and
- Restrict access to the immediate area of the works.

7.5.2 **Before commencing any item of work at any SERC location, contractors must not:**

- Use or interfere with any piece of SERC equipment under any circumstances.
- Work alone unless following formal lone working procedures (including advising the College in advance via email to estates@serc.ac.uk).
- Carry out any item of work which is deemed to be a controlled activity, thus requiring a "Permit to Work" issued by Estates staff. Activities requiring a "Permit to Work" are:
    - Hot Works - any process that can be a source of ignition.
    - Works in Confined Spaces - an area whose enclosed conditions and limited access make it dangerous; and
    - Working at height.

Contractors must report any accident, injury or incident to Estates Staff or Duty Manager to ensure the accident, injury or incident is recorded on the on-line system via the App on the Health & Safety Team Site. Similarly, any damage to premises or equipment must also be notified to Estates Staff or Duty Manager.

7.5.3 Upon completion of the works, the contractor will leave the site clean, tidy and free from all waste materials.

7.5.4 Contractors may be subjected to Quality Audits by Estates Staff and must provide the relevant information as requested. Failure to provide such information may result in the contractor being asked to leave site.

7.6 Risk Assessments & Method Statements (RAMS)

On being requested to undertake work, contractors must carry out risk assessments for the proposed works and, where deemed necessary, provide Method Statements detailing safe systems of work. The greater the risk, the more detailed the system of work will need to be. These must be completed prior to the works commencing and must be available to Estates Staff as requested.

7.7 Controlled Activities – Permit to Work

Permits to Work are issued by Estates staff for controlled activities. Activities requiring a "Permit to Work" are:

- Hot Works - any process that can be a source of ignition;
- Works in Confined Spaces - an area whose enclosed conditions and limited access make it dangerous; and
- Working at height.

8.0 Service Request Process

- Staff who wish to report an estates related fault or who require an estates related service need to do this via the Service Desk App. This can be found in the App's section on the staff intranet.
- If additional information is required, a member of the Estates Unit will contact the appropriate Department/Unit.

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9.0 Communication Plan

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

10.0 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	Minor job role clarifications.
2.0	February 2024	Transferred to new Accessibility Template
3.0	December 2024	Head of Estates Job role changed to Head of Estates, Facilities and Health & Safety. Staff identity / access control cards may be withdrawn with the approval of the Head of HR.
4.0	December 2025	Minor job role clarifications.