

DURHAM UNIVERSITY FOOD ALLERGENS POLICY

1 Policy Purpose and Statement

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the University's position in relation to the management of food allergens on campus, to foster best practice, and promote legal compliance with the Food Information for Consumers Regulation 2014 (FICR 2014).

1.2 Definition

A food allergen is a substance in a food that can cause an allergic reaction. Food allergens are normally proteins and, in some people, the immune system thinks food allergens are dangerous. The immune response to these allergenic proteins is what leads to allergic reactions.

1.3 Statement

Rates of food allergy and intolerance vary across the world. In the UK, an estimated 2 million people are living with a diagnosed food allergy, affecting 1-2% of adults and 5-8% of children. While food allergen-related deaths are relatively low (an average of 10 per year), those most at risk include teenagers and young adults in their 20s who are beginning to make independent food choices. Social pressures and a lack of awareness may increase risk-taking behaviours.

In December 2014, the Food Information for Consumers Regulation (No. 1169/2011) was introduced, requiring all businesses that manufacture or provide food or drink, whether pre-packed or non-pre-packed, to identify 14 specified food allergens. In October 2021, Natasha's Law was added, specifying labelling requirements for Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS) products.

Durham University has approximately 20,000 students and 5,000 staff, who, along with external visitors, consume food and beverages across a wide range of catering facilities on campus, including college dining halls, college bars, cafés, visitor attractions, toastie bars, tuck shops, Durham University Nursery, and Durham Students' Union.

Of the 20,000 students, 6,000 reside on campus in various University accommodations with differing levels of access to shared self-catering facilities. While self-catering falls outside the FICR 2014, the sharing of food and kitchen facilities creates the likelihood of those with a food allergy being impacted by the actions of others.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all on-campus catering facilities, including all maintained Colleges and St Chad's college (St Johns' College has a separate policy), covering college dining halls, college bars, cafés, visitor attractions (e.g. the Botanic Garden), toastie bars, tuck shops, Durham University Nursery, and Durham Students' Union, as well as all third-party providers of on-campus catering services.

It also includes guidance regarding on-campus accommodation and the allocation process for students who have disclosed food allergies.

2 Responsibilities

3.1 PVC Colleges and Student Experience (or alternative responsible role)

a) Policy owner with overall operational accountability and responsibility for ensuring that systems are in place, to mitigate ill-health from food containing allergens on campus.

b) To ensure provision of resources required to establish, implement, maintain and continually improve the management of food allergens on campus.

3.2 Director of Operations

a) To ensure provision of resources required to establish, implement, maintain and continually improve the management of food allergens on campus.

b) To ensure that systems are in place, to mitigate ill-health through the sale or service of food containing allergens on campus.

c) To ensure that room allocation systems are in place, to mitigate ill-health through food allergens within student accommodation on campus.

d) To ensure that food allergen communications are effectively disseminated to all appropriate University members in a timely manner.

3.3 Head of Operations

a) To ensure that systems are in place, to mitigate ill-health through the sale or service of food containing allergens on campus.

b) To ensure that room allocation systems are in place, to mitigate ill-health through food allergens within student accommodation on campus.

c) To ensure that food allergen communications are effectively disseminated to all appropriate University members in a timely manner.

3.4 Operational Line Management

a) To ensure that systems are implemented and local arrangements are operationalised for the day-to-day management of food allergens within their function.

b) To ensure all relevant team members are appropriately trained.

3.5 Health and Safety Service

a) To support the review of food allergen legislation and best practice.

b) To periodically review compliance against policy.

3.6 Operations Directorate Health & Safety Committee

a) To review food allergen legislation and best practice.

b) To monitor food allergen systems, performance and training compliance within area of responsibility.

c) To provide performance reports as requested by management or the Health and Safety Service.

3.7 Other Health & Safety Committees

a) To monitor food allergen systems, performance and training compliance within area of responsibility.

b) To provide performance reports as requested by management or the Health and Safety Service.

3.8 University Members Supporting a Catering Function

a) To cooperate with managers and supervisors and carry out any assigned tasks or duties in a safe manner, following any safety instructions they have been given.

b) To report any food allergen non-compliance to line management.

3.8 All Colleagues and Students

a) To ensure their own health and safety, and the health and safety of others affected by their acts or omissions.

4 Policy, Procedures and Enforcement

4.1 Provision of Prepacked, Prepacked for Direct Sale, and Non-Prepacked Food and Beverages

a) Catering facilities on campus are registered food businesses. Therefore, all food and beverages sold or served must comply with the legal requirement to identify the 14 specified food allergens as outlined in FICR 2014.

b) The 14 mandatory food allergens are: Celery, Cereals containing gluten (e.g. wheat, rye, barley, and oats), Crustaceans (e.g. prawns, crabs, and lobsters), Eggs, Fish, Lupin, Milk, Molluscs (e.g. mussels and oysters), Mustard, Tree nuts (e.g. almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, Brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios, and macadamia nuts), Peanuts, Sesame seeds, Soybeans, Sulphur dioxide and sulphites (if present at a concentration greater than 10 parts per million).

c) Food allergens may be communicated verbally to consumers. However, to ensure accuracy and consistency, all allergen information must also be detailed in writing.

d) Natasha's Law mandates that all Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS) foods—which are prepared, prepacked, and sold on the same premises—must include clear ingredient lists and allergen information on labelling.

e) All food allergen information and signage must be consistent, easily accessible, and clearly visible.

f) To ensure accurate allergen identification, University members involved in food and beverage provision must:

- Regularly check ingredient lists of all products used.
- Use standardised recipes.
- Ensure that delivered products match the orders placed.
- Keep allergen information up to date.
- Store ingredients in original or clearly labelled containers.
- Label prepacked foods for direct sale with allergen information.
- Provide staff training on allergen management.

g) The identification of the 14 mandatory food allergens is based on product and ingredient composition provided by suppliers. Despite robust systems, processes, and procedures being in place, the size constraints of our commercial kitchens, where a variety of food allergens are used, means that a low residual risk of allergen cross-contamination remains. Similarly, due to the complexities of the UK food chain and suppliers, a low residual risk of cross-contamination persists. Some suppliers use precautionary allergen labelling to highlight potential allergen cross-contact risks within the supply chain, which cannot always be fully mitigated through risk management measures.

4.2 Peanuts and Tree Nuts

a) The University is not a nut-free environment. However, due to the high risk associated with severe allergic reactions to peanuts and tree nuts, the University has made the decision not to sell, serve, or use unpackaged peanuts or tree nuts on campus (except as outlined in 4.2e).

b) Packaged products containing peanuts or tree nuts may be sold or served, provided that all ingredients are clearly listed on the packaging.

c) Coconut, pine nuts, and nutmeg are biologically distinct from tree nuts and may be sold, served, or used in both packaged and unpackaged forms.

d) The University cannot guarantee that some food products are 100% free of peanuts and tree nuts, as many suppliers include precautionary statements such as “may contain nuts” or “produced in a facility that handles nuts”.

e) While discouraged, if students or clients provide unpackaged food items containing peanuts or tree nuts, such as wedding cakes with marzipan or mentors bringing cakes for mentees, the presence of peanuts or tree nuts must be clearly displayed or signposted (e.g. on written menus). If the item is prepared by a non-food business, compliance with Section 4.6 must also be ensured.

4.3 Application and room allocation

a) The standard accommodation application processes shall provide the opportunity for prospective residential students to disclose detail of food allergies.

b) In section 4.3a above, it is important not to confuse ‘allergy’ with ‘dietary requirement’.

c) The allocation of accommodation within our Colleges will take account of disclosed allergies where necessary.

d) Following the standard college allocation process, students will have the opportunity to disclose all dietary requirements to their allocated college.

4.4 Procedures and training requirements

- a) A Food Safety HACCP Plan shall provide or signpost full procedures relating to the food allergen management processes.
- b) Training documents, including an Oracle Learning module have been created to ensure that University members understand the procedures when asked to provide food allergen information and know the risk of food allergen cross-contamination when handling and preparing foods.
- c) University members supporting a catering function or with a managerial responsibility for a catering function must complete the appropriate staff training document e.g. the Oracle Learning module.
- d) University members with a managerial responsibility for accommodation, including allocation must complete the Oracle Learning module.

4.5 Self-catered kitchens and supplementary catering facilities

- a) Self-catered kitchens and supplementary catering facilities will include posters providing general food allergy information.
- b) Allergen awareness information will be included within residential student pre-arrival information.
- c) Alternative / secure food storage is to be available to those with a disclosed food allergy.

4.6 Community food provision

Individuals who are not food businesses and occasionally provide food at charity events or voluntary cake sales are exempt from the requirements of the FICR 2014; however, such provision on campus must ensure the following.

- a) All advertising and other information provided about the event is clear about how, where and by whom food is prepared.
- b) Volunteers must understand that food prepared at home is still required under law to be safe to eat, and guidance is available and must be provided to volunteers in regard to good practice around food hygiene/safety to ensure food is prepared, stored and transported safely.
- c) Once food prepared by volunteers is delivered to the venue, care is taken by organisers to ensure that the food is kept/served in safe, hygienic conditions.
- d) Where possible, a clear list of ingredients is displayed next to each dish.
- e) The following disclaimer is clearly displayed: "This dish was kindly prepared by a volunteer for this event in a domestic setting. Every attempt has been made by the volunteer preparing this dish, to ensure a full list of ingredients comprising this dish is included. However, we cannot guarantee this list to be comprehensive, nor can we guarantee that no food allergens may be present within any ingredient set out above. Therefore, in the event that you have any food allergy we recommend that for safety reasons, you do not sample the food prepared by our volunteers. However, should you choose to do so, please note that you do so at your own risk."

4.7 Adrenaline Auto-injectors

- a) Adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs) are devices to administer adrenaline to a person experiencing a severe allergic reaction.
- b) EpiPen®, Jext® and Emerade ® are some of the most popular brands of AAI.
- c) The University can't hold AAIs in first aid kits because they are a prescribed medicine. Whilst the Human Medicines Regulations 2017 identified that a first aider can have swift access to a school's emergency stock of spare AAI devices, to give lifesaving help to a child with a severe allergy. It is understood that the University falls outside of the Education Act's definition of a school (an educational institution which is outside of the further education sector).
- d) First aiders are covered under the University's insurance to administer student's own AAIs, provided that they are trained in their use and they are formally authorised as first aiders by the University. Therefore, all first aid training courses' content must include the administration of AAI pens.

4.8 Incident reporting

- a) Incident reporting relating to food allergens will follow the University's incident reporting procedures, and dependent on severity follow standard processes for critical incident or major incident.

4.10 Enforcement

a) Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary procedures in line with the University's standard misconduct and disciplinary regulations.

5 Review

a) This policy, along with accompanying training documentation, are to be reviewed on an annual basis, including representation from; Director of Operations, Head of Operations and Health and Safety Business Partner.

6 Related Information

- a) Food Information for Consumers Regulation 2014 (No. 1169/2011)
- b) Food Allergen Labelling and Information Requirements under the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulations (No. 1169/2011) Technical Guidance
- c) Oracle HS Food Allergen Training
- d) Food Safety HACCP Plan

7 Version Control

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