

Environmental Sustainability, Estates Services Energy policy, FAQ for building management Summer 2023

1) PRAC energy policy

The Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (PRAC) approved the following energy policy on 11/10/2022.

- University buildings will not be heated above 19° C **or cooled below 26° C**.
- The heating and cooling system timeclocks should be set between 8:00am–3:00pm, Monday to Friday.

These changes have reduced direct carbon emissions by 3,400 tCO₂e during the winter months and saved £1.1M. This saving is due to a 17% reduction of our gas consumption for this period.

These steps help the University achieve its commitment to net zero carbon and biodiversity net gain by 2035, as stated in the [Environmental Sustainability strategy](#).

The University has updated its energy-saving measures for the summer months to reduce energy use and our impact on the environment.
The changes include cooling buildings to 26° C, increasing reliance on natural ventilation, changing cooling timings and reviewing weekend settings.

Below are some resources for building management staff involved in implementing this policy. Please contact the Environmental Sustainability team with any further queries.

2) Energy use in buildings FAQs:

1. Who will update the Building Management Systems (BMS)?

- Buildings can update their own temperature and time settings; however, the Estates Services BMS team will be updating the temperature changes that have not been done for Estates Services managed buildings.
- Estates services BMS team will update the settings in conjunction with building managers for sites that are managed independently.
- If you require assistance, please contact [FM helpdesk](#).

2. Are there exceptions to the default environmental control settings?

- Yes, if there is an event, or course that is set to occur outside of regular operating hours, please provide the relevant information to your building manager or through the FM Helpdesk at least 4 days prior to the required change. They will ensure the necessary adjustments are made to deliver at an appropriate temperature.

- Space that is temperature controlled for research and science purposes (e.g., labs) is exempt from the default environmental control settings. However, this exception should be limited to the minimum required space.

3. What can be done to reduce energy consumption during the summertime?

Follow the '[Be Energy Friendly](#)' guidance. This energy campaign has been initially launched by the University in response to the energy crisis. The following calls for action relate to the summer times.



- **Breeze in, sun out:** Let the breeze in during the cooler hours* and keep the sun out by closing blinds to rooms in direct sunlight.
- **Drink up:** Remember to stay hydrated. You may need to drink up to three litres of water on a very hot day
- **Dress for the weather:** loose fitting clothing and light fabrics help air flow to your body
- **Cool to 26:** We're cooling buildings to 26 °C to save energy. If you can change local controls, don't go below this level. Remember, setting a lower temperature doesn't cool the space quicker.
- **Switch off:** All appliances emit heat. Turn them off at the socket when not in use. If you can access local controls, turn off the air conditioning when you leave the room. Remember to turn off your computer and screen at the end of the working day, and switch to 'hibernate' if you're away from your desk.

** Ground floor and easy-to-reach windows must not be left open when rooms are not occupied. Speak to your building manager if you require out-of-hours ventilation*

***Labs requiring regulated environments will continue to be cooled to required temperatures*

4. We are asking to open windows in the cooler times of the day. Are we allowed to leave the windows open in the evening time, or early in the morning? What do we do in terms of security?

- Keeping the windows open overnight can significantly cool the buildings and should be done when possible.
- Ground floor and easy-to-reach windows must not be left open when rooms are not occupied. Speak to your building manager if you require out-of-hours ventilation.

5. What is the policy regarding personal fans that people might want to use?

- Everyone's perception of the environment is different, and some people may find themselves uncomfortable from time to time. Although personal desk fans do not reduce the room temperature, they could offer relief if people feel the heat. Like any other electrical equipment, personal fans require safety checks and need to be turned off from the socket when not in use.

6. What to do if there are people with special health requirements that struggle with the heat?

- In the first instance, building users should confirm that small adjustments listed above (i.e., dressing to weather and hydrating) have been adopted. Where the discomfort persists, building users can contact the building manager to confirm that the temperature is within the accepted range.
 - a. Where the temperature has fluctuated outside of the accepted range, building managers should report to FM Helpdesk and this will be investigated.
 - b. Where the temperature is within the accepted range and the building user remains uncomfortable, please consider relocating the individual to a different location within the building or floor. For example, moving them away from sunny windows, closer to an open and shaded window, relocating their workstation in proximity to an air-conditioning exit, etc.
- Where there are building users with specific needs relating to temperature (such as health conditions), please seek guidance from your local HR staff or departmental safety officer to see what adjustments can be made.

7. Where to find guidance on working outdoors in high temperature?

In case of concern please contact your local compliance team or [Occupational Health Services](#).

8. What if the conditions in the building require long-term investment?

- For some buildings, the existing building fabric does not offer sufficient insulation. Although the aim is to address as many projects as quickly as possible, complex projects can take years to plan and deliver. To find out more about opportunities to improve building fabric, please consult the Environmental Sustainability team while considering some short-term solutions with the FM Helpdesk.
- Short-term installation solutions to consider where possible/applicable are shades and ventilation.

9. What else can building managers do to support the Be Energy Friendly campaign?

- We recommend that the Be Energy Friendly calls for action will be discussed with the relevant stakeholders, e.g., building management meetings or departmental reps.
- The campaign working group prepared resources to communicate the calls for actions, including posters to print, digital screens, and social media assets. [See campaign pack](#).
- Following is a suggested template for communicating with building occupiers. This can be used in internal newsletter, emailing, intranet, etc.

Suggested communication text for building users:

Title: Working together to reduce energy use and carbon footprint

Following the success of the Be Energy Friendly campaign during the winter months, the University has updated the calls for action to suit the summer months. The changes that were introduced on autumn 2022 have reduced direct carbon emissions by 3,400 tCO₂e during the winter months and saved £1.1M.

Following the guidance from the University, the building's air-conditioning will run from 8:00am to 3:00pm (assuming regular operating hours), with temperature controls set to 26°C in the summer months.

The followings are calls for action to support the University's effort in saving energy and carbon emissions and maintain a comfortable temperature.

- **Breeze in, sun out:** Let the breeze in during the cooler hours* and keep the sun out by closing blinds to rooms in direct sunlight.
- **Drink up:** Remember to stay hydrated. You may need to drink up to three litres of water on a very hot day
- **Dress for the weather:** loose fitting clothing and light fabrics help air flow to your body
- **Cool to 26:** We're cooling buildings to 26°C to save energy. If you can change local controls, don't go below this level. Remember, setting a lower temperature doesn't cool the space quicker.
- **Switch off:** All appliances emit heat. Turn them off at the socket when not in use. If you can access local controls, turn off the air conditioning when you leave the room. Remember to turn off your computer and screen at the end of the working day, and switch to 'hibernate' if you're away from your desk.

See [campaign webpage](#) for more advice or visit the [sustainability website](#).

Having said that, we understand that everyone's internal temperature varies, and some may find themselves uncomfortable with these environmental controls or have particular needs relating to temperature (such as health conditions). If this is the case, please contact me [*name, contact details*], and we will do our best to assist.

Thank you for your help in this matter and please do contact me if you have any questions.

Kind Regards
[*name, building manager*]

Appendix – Key contacts

The colleagues listed below are the first points of contact for concerns regarding heating and cooling in estate buildings.

FM Helpdesk

T: +44 (0) 1865 2 70087

E: facilities@admin.ox.ac.uk

DLO Helpdesk

T: +44 (0) 1865 2 70877

E: estates.helpdesk@admin.ox.ac.uk

Environmental Sustainability team

T: +44 (0) 1865 6 14605

E: sustainability@admin.ox.ac.uk

