

University of Reading - Dining Services

Allergen Management and Inclusive Dining Policy

Policy Owner: Director of Dining Services

Applies to: All University of Reading Dining Services operations

Classification: Critical Safety Policy

Version: 1.3

Effective Date: 20 Feb 2026

Review Cycle: Annual and continuous improvement review

1. Vision and Commitment

The University of Reading is committed to delivering one of the safest, most inclusive, and most trusted university dining environments in the United Kingdom.

Dining Services recognises that food allergies represent both a serious medical risk and a significant barrier to full student participation in university life. We are committed to creating an environment in which students with food allergies can dine with confidence, independence, dignity, and safety.

Our objectives are to:

- Exceed all UK legal requirements
- Eliminate preventable allergen risk
- Provide industry-leading allergen transparency
- Enable fully inclusive dining access
- Establish Reading as a national leader in allergen-safe university catering

This policy supports the University's commitments to:

- Student wellbeing and safety
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Access and participation
- Excellence in student experience

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy fully complies with and exceeds:

- Food Safety Act 1990
- Food Information Regulations 2014

- Food Information Amendment Regulations 2019 (Natasha's Law)
- Retained EU Regulation 1169/2011
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Dining Services recognises the 14 legally declarable allergens:

- Celery
- Cereals containing gluten
- Crustaceans
- Eggs
- Fish
- Lupin
- Milk
- Molluscs
- Mustard
- Nuts
- Peanuts
- Sesame
- Soya
- Sulphites

3. Strategic Principles

University of Reading Dining Services operates according to six core allergen safety principles:

3.1 Transparency

Students will have access to clear, accurate, real-time allergen information.

3.2 Safety by Design

Allergen safety will be embedded into systems, facilities, recipes, and workflows.

3.3 Risk Minimisation

Cross-contamination risk will be actively minimised through operational controls.

3.4 Student-Centred Support

Students with allergies will receive individualised support where needed.

3.5 Continuous Improvement

Allergen management will evolve based on evidence, audit, and best practice.

3.6 Sector Leadership

The University of Reading will actively contribute to advancing allergen safety in Higher Education.

4. Leadership and Governance

4.1 Director of Dining Services

Responsible for:

- Strategic leadership of allergen safety
- Ensuring sufficient resources and systems
- Establishing allergen safety as a core organisational priority
- Reporting performance to University leadership

4.2 Allergen Safety Lead (Designated Role)

Dining Services will maintain a designated Allergen Safety Lead responsible for:

- Policy oversight and implementation
- Incident investigation
- Training compliance monitoring
- Continuous improvement initiatives
- Liaison with University Health and Safety and Student Services

4.3 Management and Supervisors

Responsible for:

- Operational compliance
- Staff supervision
- Allergen information accuracy
- Immediate incident response

4.4 All Staff

All staff share responsibility for allergen safety and must:

- Complete required training
- Follow allergen procedures without exception
- Never guess allergen information
- Escalate uncertainties immediately

5. Allergen Information Systems

The University of Reading will operate a fully integrated digital allergen management system.

5.1 Recipe-Level Allergen Control

All recipes must be:

- Digitally managed within NetMenu
- Fully ingredient-verified via Electronic Document Exchange with Suppliers
- Automatically generating allergen declarations
- Reviewed and approved prior to service

5.2 Customer-Facing Allergen Information

Students will have access to allergen and ingredient information through:

- Digital menu boards
- Online menu platforms
- Labelling on Counters
- Trained staff support
- Off-packet if pre-packaged

Information will be:

- Accurate
- Up-to-date
- Easily accessible
- Clearly communicated

5.3 Prepacked for Direct Sale (Natasha's Law Compliance)

All PPDS food will be fully compliant and include:

- Full ingredient list

- Clear allergen emphasis
- Traceable preparation records

Dining Services will exceed minimum compliance standards.

6. Cross-Contamination Prevention

Dining Services will implement industry-leading controls.

6.1 Kitchen Design and Workflow

Where feasible:

- Segregated preparation zones
- Controlled allergen handling procedures
- Designated preparation equipment
- Clearly labelled storage systems

6.2 Operational Controls

Mandatory procedures include:

- Handwashing between tasks
- Equipment sanitisation protocols
- Ingredient verification prior to use
- Controlled service procedures
- Staff supervision during service

6.3 Specialist Allergen-Controlled Production

Dining Services will develop enhanced allergen-controlled preparation where required to support students with medical dietary needs.

This includes potential development of:

- Dedicated allergen-controlled preparation areas
- Controlled allergen-free production environments
- Specialist allergen-safe menu provision

7. Student Support and Inclusive Dining

The University of Reading will provide sector-leading support for students with allergies.

Support includes:

- Individual consultations with Dining Services
- Direct communication channels
- Specialist dietary guidance on our menus
- Trusted allergen-controlled options where appropriate

Dining Services will work in partnership with:

- Student Services
- Disability Advisory Service
- Accommodation Services
- Student Wellbeing

This ensures students can safely participate in university dining.

8. Training and Competency

All Dining Services staff must complete allergen training.

Training includes:

- Legal responsibilities
- Allergen awareness
- Cross-contamination prevention
- Communication procedures
- Incident response

Training frequency:

- Mandatory at induction
- Mandatory annual refresher
- Additional training for supervisors and chefs

Compliance target: **100% staff completion**

9. Supplier and Procurement Controls

Dining Services will operate robust supplier verification systems.

Suppliers must:

- Provide full allergen declarations via EDI (electronic document interchange)
- Provide traceable ingredient specifications
- Notify Dining Services of ingredient changes

Dining Services will:

- Review supplier allergen data regularly
- Maintain traceability records
- Verify supplier compliance

10. Incident Prevention, Response, and Learning

Dining Services operates a zero-tolerance approach to preventable allergen risk.

Incident response procedure:

Immediate actions:

1. Protect student safety
2. Remove affected food
3. Escalate to management
4. Record incident
5. Investigate root cause
6. Implement corrective actions

All incidents are treated as critical safety events and should be reported via the Health and Safety pages on the University website

11. Audit, Monitoring, and Continuous Improvement

Dining Services will maintain a robust audit programme.

Audits include:

- Internal allergen audits
- Recipe compliance reviews
- Training compliance monitoring
- Operational compliance inspections

Dining Services will maintain continuous improvement plans.

12. Specialist Allergen-Safe Dining Leadership (Strategic Commitment)

The University of Reading is committed to becoming a sector leader in allergen-safe dining.

This includes:

- Development of specialist allergen-controlled dining environments
- Enhanced allergen-safe production capability
- Sector collaboration and leadership
- Contribution to national best practice

13. Culture of Safety and Trust

Allergen safety is a core organisational priority.

Dining Services will foster a culture in which:

- Student safety is paramount
- Staff feel empowered to prioritise safety
- Transparency and honesty are standard
- Continuous improvement is expected

14. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
- Following any incident
- Following legislative change
- As part of continuous improvement

15. Statement of Leadership Commitment

The University of Reading Dining Services is committed to providing one of the safest and most inclusive university dining environments in the United Kingdom.

Allergen safety is a core responsibility shared across the organisation and a fundamental component of student wellbeing, inclusion, and trust.