

The University of Warwick Estates Office

Open Water Safety Statement of Principles

INTRODUCTION

The University has a range of open water features on our campuses, including ponds, lakes, a river and streams, which enhance the environment for wildlife and the enjoyment of people of all ages. These natural features can present a significant risk to people, especially in summer when swimming in cold water can be attractive and in winter when individuals may put themselves at risk by trying to walk on ice over water.

The University of Warwick does not support or approve the use of ANY area of open water for swimming or other water recreational activity to areas including those identified in Appendix A (Campus) and B (Innovation Campus, Stratford-upon-Avon).

For clarity, but not necessarily an exhaustive list of locations, the locations of our open water bodies/features are documented on the ArcGIS system here: [Flood Management Working Group](#) .

Legal and Scope

This statement supports the University's duties, so far as is reasonably practicable, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. It applies to university-controlled land containing, or immediately adjacent to, open water features including lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, drainage channels, balancing ponds, sustainable drainage features and seasonal water bodies. It is intended to protect staff, contractors, students, visitors and other foreseeable users of the campus environment. This statement does not permit swimming or other unauthorised recreational water activity and does not replace the requirement for suitable and sufficient site-specific and task-specific risk assessments.

Approach

Safety Criteria for Management and Design

Work takes place around and in open water on campus to enhance and support biodiversity. In addition, there are legal requirements to manage the ponds and lakes for the Great Crested Newt population that exists on main campus. This includes work such as shade reduction, duckweed removal, reedbed management and silt removal. Before such work is undertaken, design factors will be taken into consideration to further improve safety.

Environmental Management

Where wildlife may be put at risk from pollution (oil/blue green algae/etc.) or pollution is found to be present in or entering open water, Estates Staff and/or Contractors must report such occurrences immediately to their line manager/ supervisor who in turn, will notify the relevant senior officer of Estates for the appropriate action to be taken.

Risk Assessment

The Estates Grounds and Gardens Team and the Estates Team at the Innovation Campus, Stratford-upon-Avon are responsible for maintaining open water sites and supporting suitable and sufficient risk assessment for the work involved and for the foreseeable risks to staff, contractors, students, visitors and members of the public. The specific risk nature of each identified open water location must be considered and controlled, (so far as reasonably practicable) including access and egress or desire lines, visibility, likely behaviours, vulnerable persons, seasonal conditions and emergency arrangements. The results of the risk assessment, including any action taken to reduce or eliminate hazards, will be formally recorded.

Control measures will be selected using a hierarchy of control. The University will first seek to eliminate or reduce the hazard where reasonably practicable, then consider access restriction, barriers or edge protection, route design and natural surveillance, warning signage, rescue equipment, and finally emergency arrangements, information, instruction, training and supervision appropriate to the level of risk.

Safety Inspections/Hazard Identification

The University Health & Safety Services Team will support the Estates Grounds and Gardens Team and the Innovation Campus, Stratford-upon-Avon with routine inspections of rescue equipment, safety signs and the condition of the water and surrounding edges/banks. Inspections must be completed at defined intervals and after significant events such as severe weather, flooding, vandalism, reports of unsafe behaviour or any water-related incident. The results of all inspections and hazard identification will be recorded on the SHE system and defects will be escalated promptly for corrective action.

Site assessments and inspections must also take account of dynamic and seasonal hazards including cold water shock, sudden changes in depth, concealed edges, steep or unstable banks, poor water quality, blue-green algae, mud or entrapment, flood conditions or moving water, vegetation obscuring hazards or escape routes, reduced visibility and the risk presented by ice.

Supervision of Open Water Sites

Continuous manned supervision is not provided at open water sites. Risk control will instead be achieved through risk assessment, physical controls where appropriate, signage, information, inspection, rescue provision, emergency arrangements and task-specific supervision where required by the level of risk.

Rescue Equipment

Estates provides lifebuoys in solid and highly visible mountings around identified areas of open water, where determined by a risk assessment. These are positioned near likely points of access to the water and places where a rescue attempt may reasonably take place. This equipment is inspected weekly, by a nominated person from the Grounds and Gardens Team and results recorded along with any actions in the respective zone areas.

In the event of a water emergency, emergency services must be contacted immediately by calling 999. Rescue should, wherever possible, be carried out using a reach or throw method from a place of safety, using the equipment provided, and people should not enter the water unless they are specifically trained, equipped and authorised to do so. Rescue equipment locations, access points and arrangements for raising

the alarm must be identified through site-specific assessment and reflected in local emergency procedures where the risk assessment indicates this is required.

Provision of Information

Estates recognises that appropriate and adequate information on water safety should be provided to staff, students, contractors, visitors and members of the public to aid accident prevention. Information will be made available through means such as the student handbook (Life in Halls), inductions, local notices, seasonal communications and contractor briefings, with particular emphasis during periods of warm weather and freezing conditions.

Staff and contractors involved in work near open water, inspections, maintenance of rescue equipment or emergency response arrangements must be competent for the task and provided with suitable information, instruction, training and supervision proportionate to the level of risk.

Reporting Accidents and Incidents

Where an individual is involved in an incident, near miss or sustains injury as a result of an accident associated with open water, the event must be reported using the University incident reporting arrangements. Reports of rescue equipment misuse, vandalism or repeated unsafe behaviour must also be recorded so that trends can be reviewed and site risk assessments updated where necessary using the following link: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/healthsafetywellbeing/incidents/>

First Aid Provision at Open Water Sites

Site-specific first aid arrangements will be determined by risk assessment. First aid equipment is carried on Community Safety vehicles; however, this does not replace the need for suitable emergency rescue arrangements, clear procedures for summoning assistance and prompt contact with the emergency services where a water emergency occurs.

Ice on Open Water

Frozen water is inherently dangerous and at no time should people walk on frozen open water. Signage is displayed advising of the risks.

Responsibilities

The Estates Director will, through the Estates Leadership Team with support from the Director of Environmental, Sustainability and Infrastructure, provide appropriate management arrangements and take measures to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, all open water facilities and other areas of open water such as lakes, ponds, rivers and streams are maintained in a safe condition.

The Business Services Director and Estates Site Manager (Innovation Campus, Stratford-upon-Avon) are responsible for ensuring that the management and maintenance of lakes, ponds, rivers and streams are carried out to meet the requirements of this statement, elevating to the Estates Director any non-conformities at Warwick Innovation Campus Stratford.

The Head of Assurance, Risk and Property is responsible for ensuring that spot checks and audits are carried out to provide assurance that activities are being carried out in compliance with this statement.

This statement will be available on the Estates intranet and externally on request.

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Review

This statement dated June 2026 will be reviewed at least every two years and earlier following any significant incident, material change to site conditions, change in legal or good practice guidance, or where monitoring, inspection findings or audit outcomes indicate that revision is necessary.

Document Control			
Version Number	Date issued	Author	Update information
001	17/07/2024	Alan Warwood, Head of Facilities and Customer Service	Initial version
002	01/07/2026	Kelly Baker Head of Landscape and Operations	Review of document following consultation inc: Removal of site-specific Risk Assessment's and replaced with a generic Risk Assessment for open water features.
Authorised by: Wendy Roberts, Estates Director			Signed: 
Reviewed by: Parvez Islam, Director of Environmental, Sustainability and Infrastructure Mike Kearley, Innovation Campus, Stratford-upon-Avon Phillip McGarry, Assurance and Risk Officer			Signed:   signed:  Signed:
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FURTHER SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Any further information or support can be obtained from:

Head of Landscape and Operations email: Kelly.baker@warwick.ac.uk

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*When accessing the below appendices, please click this on the page:

University of Warwick

Appendix A

[Flood Management Working Group](#)

Appendix B

[Gritting and Snow Clearing SOP \(Stratford Campus\)](#)