

E-Scooters Safety Concerns

E-scooters have nationally gained popularity as affordable, accessible and more environmentally friendly forms of transport, and therefore the University has seen increase in their use on campus.

The University owes a duty of care to ensure everyone will be safe whilst using our campus and so recognises the safety concerns which e-scooters bring to our community.

This guidance document is for staff and students and explains the legal status of e-scooters, safety concerns related to e-scooters, and the reasons for e-scooters being prohibited from University grounds.

1. Legal status of E-scooters

1.1 Rented e-scooters & Government trials

E-scooters come under the category of “powered transporters”. “Powered transporters” fall within the legal definition of a motor vehicle under the Road Traffic Act 1988¹. Therefore, the rules that apply to motor vehicles, also apply to e-scooters.

As a motor vehicle, they must comply with various pieces of Road Traffic Legislation, including but not limited to:

- driving with a licence
- driving/riding with insurance
- driving/riding other than on a road
- need to be taxed²



Figure 1 Police in Sussex have issued a reminder that e-scooters remain illegal on roads, pavements and cycle lanes

In the UK it is only legal to ride an e-scooter on public roads if they are rented as part of government trials, currently this is limited to the list of trial areas on Gov.UK³. The City of Brighton and Hove is not listed as a government trial area at present.

The rental company can verify that the rider has the correct driving licence and provide the correct insurance for e-scooter riding. It is not currently possible to get appropriate insurance for privately owned e-scooters, meaning it is illegal to use them on the road or in public spaces.

Using privately owned e-scooters on public roads, pavements or cycle lanes is against the law because it is not possible to obtain insurance for them. Riders of e-scooters in the City could be issued with:

¹ [Road Traffic Act 1988 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

² Sussex Police- Advice on using e-scooters <https://www.sussex.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/rs/road-safety/advice-escooters/>

³ Gov.UK E-scooter trials: guidance for users [E-scooter trials: guidance for users - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-users)

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- a Fixed Penalty Notice for no insurance, with a £300 fine and six penalty points.
- a Fixed Penalty Notice for no driving licence, up to £100 fine and three to six penalty points.
- Impounding of the e-scooter.

Although private property, the University aligns with the law and government guidance (specifically the Road Traffic Act), therefore e-scooters may not be used on University grounds.

2. Restrictions within the University of Sussex

2.1 University Regulations

University [Regulation 29](#) states that no motor vehicle (including electrically propelled vehicle with two or more wheels) may be brought onto the University Park (this includes all University buildings), unless:

- it has a valid Road Fund Licence.
- it has third party insurance cover required by law, in respect of vehicles used on public roads.
- it is properly maintained and kept in good running order.

As it is currently not possible to obtain appropriate insurance for privately owned e-scooters, e-scooters are not allowed to be brought on to the University of Sussex grounds.

Serious breaches of Regulation 29 will be dealt with under the University's Disciplinary Procedures.

2.2 University Accommodation

It is a current breach of the Housing Tenancy agreement to bring e-scooters into University accommodation, on and off campus. This is detailed in the Accommodation Handbook⁴ which forms an extension of Accommodation contracts all students are advised to read and understand all the information provided before signing their online accommodation agreement.

As detailed in the [Accommodation handbook](#), all students are subject to the University's Regulations and breaches of their Accommodation Agreement could lead to internal disciplinary action.

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3. Safety concerns

3.1 Rider safety

E-scooters riders are primarily at risk. The government reports that in 2020 there were 460 accidents involving e-scooters:

- Of the 484 casualties, 384 were the e-scooter user.
- 105 e-scooter riders were seriously injured
- 278 were slightly injured and 1 casualty was killed⁵.

E-scooters tend to be driven on roads or in cycle lanes, close to vehicles. E-scooter riders are more susceptible to injuries as they are not protected by the vehicle body in the same way that car users are, and they are often harder for other drivers to see on the road.



Figure 2- E-scooter accident

The government strongly recommends the wearing of a cycle helmet and high-visibility clothing, however it is not a legal requirement. This means it can be harder to spot e-scooter riders, and if a collision were to occur the severity of an injury can be worse.

E-scooters speed capabilities vary, particularly privately owned e-scooters where there may be no speed restrictor and/ or the ability to override the built in speed safety devices by modification. Riding e-scooters fast, and with unauthorized modification, increases the likelihood and severity of injury when an accident occurs.

In June of 2020, an e-scooter rider collided with a metal fence on a footpath at Falmer railway station, adjacent to the University of Sussex campus. They were taken to hospital with serious injuries, and sadly died 3 weeks later⁶.

3.2 Pedestrian and cyclist safety

Pedestrians and cyclists are the main other road user involved in accidents involving e-scooters.

In 2020, the government reports that the number below were involved in e-scooter accidents¹:

- 13 pedestrians seriously injured and 44 slightly injured
- 7 pedal cyclists seriously injured and 14 slightly injured

⁵ Gov.UK- Department for Transport- Reported road casualties Great Britain: e-Scooter factsheet 2020 (30 September 2021) [Reported road casualties Great Britain: e-Scooter factsheet 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101112/Reported-road-casualties-Great-Britain-e-Scooter-factsheet-2020-GOV.UK-2021-09-30.pdf)

⁶ Sussex Police- Witness sought following e-scooter collision (1 July 2021) [Witnesses sought following e-scooter collision | Sussex Police](https://www.sussex.police.uk/news/witnesses-sought-following-e-scooter-collision/)

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Due to e-scooters capability of high speeds and lack of visibility, alongside them being virtually silent, pedestrians can be easily knocked down by e-scooter riders, particularly when e-scooters are driven on footpaths or through busy footfall areas. Pedestrians tend to have very little level of protection, other than standard clothing, increasing the severity of their injuries.

3.3 Fire Risk

E-scooters contain rechargeable lithium-ion batteries which pose a significant fire risk, particularly when charging.

E-scooters which are privately owned will most likely not undergo regular safety checks by their users, they are more susceptible to damage and use of third-party unauthorised batteries and chargers. This increases the likelihood of the batteries catching alight.

There is particular concern that e-scooters are being stored and/ or charged in communal corridors and hallways in University accommodation. When a fire occurs residents and occupiers escape routes are blocked, increasing the severity of the situation.



Figure 3- E-scooter fire in London UK

Fire Brigades around the UK have issued urgent warnings over the immediate danger to occupiers of storing e-scooters and e-bikes in corridors and hallways in recent months.

4. Insurance

The University's insurers, UMAL, have alerted their insured universities to the risk of e-scooters and Micro-Mobility⁷. UMAL have expressed concern over universities potential legal liabilities in respects to the foreseeable risk of injury for both riders of e-scooters and others where e-scooters are permitted on premises. UMAL have alerted the University to their duty to protect riders and others who may suffer injury or property damage arising from risks associated with their use.

UMAL have advised that e-scooters are kept away from university property due to the capability of e-scooters to cause property damage through ignition of their lithium ion batteries, particularly when damaged or charging.

The University has since taken active steps, by communications to staff and students and the creation of this guidance, to prevent e-scooters being on University grounds.

⁷ UMAL: Risk Alert- The Rise of the e-Scooter and Micro-Mobility <https://umal.co.uk/risk-alert-the-rise-of-the-e-scooter-and-micro-mobility/>

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5. Escalation

E-scooters are not permitted to be ridden or stored on university campus or in university buildings (this is inclusive of residences and off campus university accommodation and buildings), the University will begin to take enforcement action from the 1 January 2022. Any e-scooters remaining after this time are subject to removal and safe storage until the owner is able to remove the item from University Park.

Do not store e-scooters in hallways or corridors whilst awaiting removal off site as they are an obstruction and when a fire occurs could prevent an occupier's escape.

6. E-Skateboards (added May 2022)

According to UK legislation, an electric skateboard falls under the category of electric scooters, making it motorized transportation. The above guidance is applicable to e-skateboards, therefore they are not permitted to be ridden or stored on university campus or in university buildings.

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