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## Allergy Safety Checklist for Schools and Universities

This dietitian-reviewed checklist is designed to help administrators, boarding staff, and catering teams evaluate whether their operations are meeting the allergen safety demands of today's student bodies.

Each checked box counts for one point. At the end, you'll be asked to count up your score to review your team's performance.

### Section 1: Training & Allergy Awareness

Does your school or university:

- Provide ongoing allergy safety and anaphylaxis risk management training?
- Ensure all catering staff know to ask questions about dietary requirements instead of guessing?
- Support both permanent and casual staff with allergy safety procedures?
- Encourage a culture where food safety questions are welcomed?
- Reinforce the importance of admitting when they're unsure if ingredients contain allergens?

#### Practical Tip

Try implementing a five-minute pre-service allergen huddle where your head chef or supervisor highlights the top allergens present in today's menu, reviews likely cross-contamination points, and assigns specific staff to handle allergen-free meals.

### Section 2: Ingredient Management & Food Labelling

Does your team in the kitchen:

- Clearly label items containing potential allergens?
- Store ingredients containing potential allergens separately whenever possible?
- Double-check ingredients for allergens before service?
- Maintain awareness less common dietary requirements and allergens?
- Use systems that reduce the risk of miscommunication or mislabelling?

#### Practical Tip

Ingredients in products change regularly. Assign one staff member to cross-check ingredient labels on incoming stock against your master recipe sheet to avoid new allergens sneaking in.

## Section 3: Student Dining Experience

Does your approach to each meal service:

- Help students feel safe and included at mealtimes?
- Protect the dignity of students during the meal service?
- Offer students a variety of safe options instead of a single 'allergen-friendly' dish?
- Reduce the likelihood of students feeling singled out because of allergies?
- Support students who may lack confidence speaking up about allergies?

### Practical Tip

Use discreet verification systems wherever possible to avoid singling students out. Use your student ID systems to flag allergen information on student profiles, or use coloured wristbands as a subtle visual marker.



## Section 4: Inclusive Menu Design

Do your menus:

- Aim to be inclusive by default where possible?
- Consider opportunities for allergy-friendly recipe substitutions?
- Support students with religious, ethical or medical dietary needs?
- Offer a range of options to avoid making students feel like the 'special case'?
- Balance safety with meal enjoyment and variety?

### Practical Tip

Instead of designing a standard menu and then retrofitting inferior alternatives for allergic diners, try building your menu around dishes free of the top nine allergens. Allergens can be introduced as optional add-ons.

## Section 5: Communication & Continuous Improvement

Does your school:

- Encourage open communication with parents and students about allergen safety?
- Welcome questions about food ingredients and preparation?
- Review allergy safety practices regularly?
- Gather feedback from families or community members?
- Continue improving systems as student needs evolve?

### Practical Tip

Try establishing a structured multi-stakeholder allergy meeting that brings together your catering team, school or university staff, and parent representatives to provide feedback and discuss strategies to further improve student safety.



## How did your catering solution do?

Add up the number of boxes you checked and compare your final results against the table below.

<b>20 - 25 points</b>	Great work! Your food service shows all the hallmarks of a well-designed catering solution that makes the health and safety of students a priority. If you're ready to take your catering to the next level, why not consider how some themed events or dietitian visits could make your student experience better than ever?
<b>10 - 20 points</b>	Your catering solution is succeeding in some key areas, but there's plenty of room for improvement when it comes to allergen safety. Consider getting additional allergen training for your staff or requesting a consultation with a professional education caterer.
<b>0 - 10 points</b>	Your current catering solution may not have adequate allergen controls to protect the health and safety of your staff and students. Please get in touch today to discuss the most effective way to resolve any outstanding issues.

Looking to strengthen the allergy safety practices at your school or university? Get in touch with David O'Brien to discover how a specialist catering partner like **gather** by Cater Care can support community, safety, and inclusion for every student.



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### Source:

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