

What do you get from SSERC?

As well as many thousands of interactions with our advisors by phone and email, schools and colleges in Scotland made almost 100,000 visits in the last year to the members-only Health and Safety section of the SSERC website.

This is the first in a series of leaflets to highlight some of the more specific ways in which you benefit from your membership of SSERC. The first two we have chosen are the Radiation Protection Advisory service and the laboratory design consultancy.

1) Working with radioactivity

Radioactivity is usually only a topic that enters the public consciousness in a negative way, when there is an accident for instance.

However, it is an important topic and here, as with many other areas of science, SSERC feels strongly that learners should have the chance to see demonstrations and, where appropriate, carry out hands-on practical work. There are, of course, risks but these are not great and the advice your SSERC membership entitles your schools and colleges to, ensures that work can be carried out safely and effectively.

Like most other areas of science and technology, there is legislation that has to be complied with to work with radioactive material. At SSERC we digest this, work out which sections are relevant to school and in what way and present easy to follow guidance. The unique aspect of work with radioactivity is that for all such work the employer must consult with an advisor who has a specific qualification (taking a number of years to obtain) - a Radiation Protection Adviser (RPA).

Membership of SSERC automatically means you are covered by our RPA, Gregor Steele.

If you were to try to get this cover via another route, it could be possible. There are other individuals or organisations that might offer this cover. It is difficult to put a price on it but each consultation for a school would probably cost several hundred pounds, even if it were possible to find another RPA with an understanding of the school system.



The advice your SSERC membership gives you access to can be a big saver: disposal of inappropriate radioactive materials can cost many thousands of pounds... and they are more likely to be encountered than you might imagine. While SSERC's RPA cannot retrospectively prevent ill-advised acquisitions, the advice can certainly help ensure that from now on schools only have material that complies with Scottish Government legislation and does not require expensive environmental permits.

Savings - £

Several hundred per school, per year for RPA coverage (but even if it were possible to find another RPA, they would not have the in-depth knowledge of the education system and its needs). Potentially several thousand pounds if our advice prevents the acquisition of unsuitable sources.





This photo by Brakspear is licensed under CC BY-SA.

2) Laboratory design

Many local authorities have been improving their school accommodation, either by building new schools or by extensive refurbishment of existing premises.

One of the services SSERC offers as part of the membership is advice on good laboratory design, an essential part of the process. School science departments are specialised spaces and have requirements that many architects are unaware of. SSERC's involvement in the design stage can help ensure that such problems are 'nipped in the bud'.

Some common issues include:

- Chemical stores inappropriately constructed: in many cases not complying with legal H&S requirements.
- Laboratory water supplies unsuitable for use in many chemistry experiments as a result of addressing the Backflow Regulations in the cheapest manner possible.
- Unsuitable ventilation systems in classrooms, preparation areas or storage spaces leading to potential exposure of staff and pupils to hazardous fumes.

It is always more expensive to get contractors back to retrofit measures rather than amend the plans at the beginning and there are often time-consuming and expensive disputes between clients and contractors before things are put right.

SSERC has a guidance document that provides advice for architects and designers and we are on hand to discuss the requirements for any school development programs in science and technology... at no extra cost.

Savings - very variable

£0 to several tens of thousands of pounds if it prevents expensive retrofitting.



SSERC, 2 Pitreavie Court, South Pitreavie Business Park, Dunfermline KY11 8UU. Telephone 01383 626070, enquiries@sserc.scot, www.sserc.scot

SSERC is a Company Limited by Guarantee (Scottish Company No. SC131509) and a registered educational charity (Scottish Charity No. SC017884) Registered Office - 5th Floor, Quartermile Two, 2 Lister Square, Edinburgh EH3 9GL.