



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY

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Note: Where other policy documents are referred to in the document, these are indicated in italics and can be accessed via the Policies page on the main University website (<http://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/governanceand-policies/policies>)

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This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the Academic Registry.

Introduction

- 1 There are occasions when severe or adverse weather conditions create difficulties for University employees to attend their place of work. Whilst the University is committed to protecting the health and safety of all its employees, there is also a requirement to ensure that continuity is maintained for students and in our general business operations.
- 2 This policy states the responsibilities of all employees in relation to attendance at work during adverse weather conditions and the appropriate procedures and options in the event of difficulty in attending work due to adverse weather.

Background

- 3 The decision to close the University can only be made by a member of the Senior Management Team or a senior manager directly nominated to act on their behalf.
- 4 The University will be deemed open unless a specific announcement about closure is published via email, on our intranet and University social media, supported by other channels as necessary. When the University is open; staff are expected to make every reasonable effort to attend their place of work.
- 5 Whilst it is expected that all staff make every reasonable effort to get to work, it is a key principle of this guidance that the University does not expect any employee to put themselves or others at risk by travelling to and from work.
- 6 If the decision has been made to close the University due to adverse weather, employees will not be expected to attend work (except those required to maintain a safe site). In these circumstances, employees will be expected to work from home or take annual leave.
- 7 During periods of adverse weather conditions, employees should check the University website, social media and their work emails as well as weather and local travel information before attempting to travel to work. It is the responsibility of the employee to keep themselves informed about closure and travel conditions.

General guidelines

- 8 In situations of adverse weather when national and regional agencies advise to only travel in emergency situations, or the University is closed due to severe weather conditions, employees are not expected to come to work. In these situations there will be no detriment to salary or holiday entitlement.
- 9 In all other circumstances unpaid or annual leave will be deducted if all efforts to attend work have not been exhausted.
- 10 If employees' normal travel arrangements are affected by adverse weather then it is expected an employee will make every effort to attend work by making alternative arrangements wherever possible. It is reasonable to expect staff who normally drive to work, to use public transport or to walk a reasonable distance.

- 11 All possible travel to work methods should be considered. For example:
- If public transport is still operating, it is expected an employee use this mode of transport, even if the journey to work may take longer than usual
 - Changing the times of travel to allow for roads to be cleared or gritted
 - Using an alternative route / transport method
 - Car sharing with other employees

Time off and pay

- 12 Employees must report their absence at the earliest opportunity and make every reasonable effort to attend work on every day they are due to attend work. There is no automatic entitlement to work from home.
- 13 Where an employee is unable to attend their place of work due to adverse weather, the following options may be agreed:-
- Work from home (if practicable for an employee's role and there is sufficient work to allow for this)
 - Take annual leave
 - Take unpaid leave
 - Apply a combination of the above only if agreed by the relevant Head of School / Directorate / Line Manager
- 14 It must be agreed with the appropriate Head of School / Directors / Line Manager which of the above options will apply. Heads of School / Directors / Line Managers are advised to consider each situation on its merits and to apply fair, equitable and consistent treatment.
- 15 If an employee is able to attend work but arrives late, or if the University declares a closure (whether for a full day or an early closure), they will receive full pay or no detriment to leave.
- 16 If an employee is unable to attend work due to adverse weather or expects to be delayed, they should report their absence / delay as early as possible, ideally before their scheduled start time and at least within one hour of their start time or as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 17 It is an employee's responsibility to communicate with their Head of School / Directors / Line Manager throughout any absences during a period of adverse weather.
- 18 Failure to notify the University that an employee is unable to attend work without reasonable explanation will count as unauthorised absence which will be unpaid and, in a severe case, may result in formal disciplinary action being invoked.
- 19 It is the Head of School / Directors / Line Manager's responsibility to ensure that any leave (annual / unpaid) granted and / or unauthorised absence is recorded on Business Connect to avoid any overpayments.

Absence due to responsibility for dependents

- 20 There may be circumstances when an employee's ability to travel or attend work is affected by a need to provide emergency care for their dependents, the provision for compassionate leave is outlined in the University's *Special Leave Policy*.

Disability or medical conditions

- 21 If an employee has a particular pre-existing medical condition, debilitating illness and / or disability, the University recognises that this may have a greater impact in severe weather conditions. Heads of School / Director / Line Managers should consider the impact of severe weather on any employee with a pre-existing medical condition, debilitating illness or disability which may affect their ability to attend work.

Debilitating illnesses are those that significantly interfere with the activities of daily living. These include but are not limited to, arthritis, diabetes, spinal cord injury or heart disease.

- 22 Where, because of pregnancy, an employee would have greater difficulty travelling to work during adverse weather, Heads of School / Directors / Line Managers should consider the impact of adverse weather to ensure the employee does not suffer any detriment because of their condition.

Early release from work

- 23 If the University is open and the weather becomes hazardous, employees should only leave once an announcement has been made and communicated via email or in person by an authorised manager.
- 24 In the case of worsening weather, or particularly hazardous driving conditions, where an employee is clearly concerned about travelling home, Heads of School / Directors / Line Managers can make a judgement call to allow an employee to go home in advance of an announcement as above. Any such absence must count as annual leave for any employee being permitted to leave early. If, within two hours of an employee leaving early, an announcement is made as above, the absence will not count as annual leave.
- 25 If an employee chooses to leave early without prior approval from their Head of School / Directors / Line Managers, they will have time deducted from their annual leave and formal disciplinary action may be invoked.

Notification of Inability to Work

- 26 It is most important that, where possible, any disruption to normal service to students, partners, customers, clients or other stakeholders is avoided or mitigated. In particular, delivery of taught sessions and continuity of support to students is the University's priority. Therefore; the following mandatory actions are to be followed by permanent staff, fractional and associate lecturers and atypical employees:

- Staff are to inform their line manager immediately when it becomes apparent that they will be unable to attend their place of work. Teaching staff must also:
 - Immediately inform students that they will be unable to attend by email or SMS
 - Direct students to either an appropriate self or guided study session or inform them of the date and time when the missed session/s will be delivered.
 - Blackboard versions of teaching materials including presentations, notes and interactive work for students must be made available for missed sessions if not already in place.
 - If staff are required to provide emergency childcare or other welfare family support due to adverse weather they are to agree with their line manager what can reasonably be managed and achieved when working from home.
- 27 Line Managers are to maintain a contact list for their direct reports including telephone numbers so that they are able to remain in contact when working from home or other non-University sites.
- 28 Advice and clarification on all or any part of the above can be sought from Human Resources.