



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



## SPECIAL LEAVE POLICY

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Note: Hyperlinks have been provided for ease of reference. For other documents (referred to in italics) please see the Policies page on the main University website (<http://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-policies/policies>).

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## Background

- 1 The University is committed to developing work practices and human resources policies that support work-life balance.
- 2 In support of this commitment, the University has a range of additional leave options to help employees to achieve an appropriate balance between work and personal commitments.
- 3 The right to request to work more flexibly, which is available to all employees who meet the requisite criteria, is dealt with under the *Flexible Working Policy*.
- 4 This policy and procedure is not intended to be prescriptive and therefore each request should be considered on its' own merit and decisions to authorise leave will be at the discretion of the appropriate Line Manager / Head of School / Director. Line Managers should be informed as soon as possible that time off is required.
- 5 The provisions made within this policy apply to all employees irrespective of length of service, hours of work or grade.

## Purpose Statement

- 6 The University recognises that there are occasions when employees require time off from work for circumstances not covered by other University policies. Consideration of applications for time off under the special leave policy will be made promptly, fairly and equitably by managers and should consider the needs of the service.

## Applicability and Scope

- 7 This policy applies to all University employees. It will not normally apply to atypical workers, contractors or agency workers.
- 8 Its purpose is to provide employees with information and options for special and other leave not covered in other University policies.
- 9 The provisions set out in this policy are not exhaustive and if any requests for special leave fall outside of it, the manager should seek further advice from the HR Directorate. Special leave cannot be granted in retrospect.

## Responsibilities

- 10 It is the responsibility of **employees** to make every effort to attend work regularly and carry out their duties to an acceptable standard, to be aware of the Special leave policy and to make appropriate requests as and when the need arises. Employees should, where possible, request special leave via Business Connect and be able to explain to their manager their reasons. This is to enable managers to make a decision about whether the request is granted. Employees should remain in regular contact when absent from work due to special leave.

- 11 It is the responsibility of **Line Managers** to ensure that employees are aware of the *Special Leave Policy* and to consider each special leave request fairly and on its own merit. Managers should speak with their employees when a request for special leave is made and ensure that appropriate leave is granted in accordance with the policy and accurate records are kept. Line Managers will need to ensure that if there are any salary adjustments they inform Human Resources to make any changes. Managers should notify and seek support from the HR Directorate as appropriate.
- 12 The **HR Directorate** will be available to provide further advice and guidance on the application of this policy.

## Entitlement to Special Leave

- 13 There is no qualifying period for entitlement to special leave under this policy. Each situation will be considered on the basis of the individual's circumstances, at the discretion of their manager and in line with the departments business needs.

## Definitions and types of Special Leave

### Compassionate Leave

- 14 Compassionate leave may be granted if an employee has serious personal or family difficulties at short notice. This type of leave is designed to help employees in exceptional circumstances.
- 15 Line Managers have the discretion to grant up to two days paid leave to employees so they are able to deal with serious personal or family difficulties in a rolling 12 month period may be granted. Some situations may require employees to be absent from work for longer, in this case the Line Manager will explore other solutions such as annual leave, flexible working, temporary reduction in contracted hours or unpaid leave. The employee should keep the Line Manager up to date.

### Bereavement Leave

#### **Immediate family: parent, spouse, partner, child, grandparent/child, brother, sister**

- 16 In the event of a death of immediate family a maximum of up to five days paid leave will be granted. Should further leave be required the Line Manager will explore other solutions. The employee should keep the Line Manager up to date regularly.

#### **Close relatives or friends**

- 17 Where there has been a death of other relatives or a close friend one day's paid leave will be granted for employees to attend the funeral. This should be discussed and agreed in advance with the Line Manager.

## **Parental Bereavement Leave**

- 18 This policy reiterates our commitment to supporting employees through their grief by ensuring that bereaved parents can take parental bereavement leave. The policy applies to employees who have suffered the loss of a child under the age of 18 on or after 6 April 2020. The policy also applies to parents who suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy. This type of leave is covered separately under *Parental Bereavement Leave policy*.

## **Domestic Emergencies Leave**

- 19 Leave may be granted if an employee has to deal with critical domestic emergencies, which may include fire, flood or burglary at home and/or breakdown of childcare arrangements. This leave is intended to be a short-term solution to enable employees to remedy their individual situation.
- 20 Line Managers have the discretion to grant up to two days paid leave in a rolling twelve month period may be granted. Should further leave be required the Line Manager will explore other solutions.

## **Study Leave (including exam attendance and graduation)**

- 21 To request study leave refer to the *Learning and Development Policy*.

## **Attending Court as a Witness or for Jury Service**

- 22 Employees who attend Court as a witness or those called for jury service will be granted leave to attend and should present to their Line Manager the written notification of witness or jury service attendance as soon as it is received. A copy should be sent to the Human Resources Directorate.
- 23 The employee should claim the loss of earnings from the Court to which they are entitled, and forward the remittance form to the Human Resources Directorate, an amount equal to the allowance received will then be deducted from the employee's pay in the appropriate month. This should include a contribution to the employee's pension as there is no break in service.

## **Members of the Reserve Forces**

- 24 Employees who are members of the Volunteer Reserve Forces (Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marines Reserve, Territorial Army or Royal Auxiliary Air Force) are expected to inform their Line Manager of their next dates for training. This should be done at the earliest opportunity or at least one month in advance and to provide copies of any documentation prior to the leave being approved.
- 25 The University is not legally obliged to pay to make payments to members of staff for time off for completing duties as members of the Volunteer Reserve Forces; however, it values the transferable skills gained by members of staff who are reservists. We will grant one week additional paid leave per year; however, any reasonable leave requested in excess of one week, may be granted, subject to the Line Manager's approval, and should be taken from the employee's annual leave entitlement or be unpaid.
- 26 If a reservist employee is mobilised, the University will seek as far as possible to place the employee when demobilised in their former role or if this is not reasonably practical, to a role at an equivalent level.

- 27 There are certain grounds when the University can apply for a deferral to the member of staff's mobilisation. The regulations state that the employer must show that the absence will cause serious harm to the business or related business. Applications must be made within 7 days of getting the call-out notice. Details of acceptable grounds of appeal can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/employee-reservist/mobilisation>.
- 28 Employees who are members of the reserve forces or thinking of joining are required to inform the University of their Status as reservists to ensure the University is better informed as to its obligations to employees, also to enable managers to plan adequately for their absence and return.

### Leave for Public Duties

- 29 Under the Employment Rights Act 1996 members of staff who hold certain public positions have a right to reasonable time off work to undertake public duties, which should be agreed with the Line Manager at least one month in advance, based on:

- how long the duties might take
- the amount of time the employee has already had off for public duties
- how the time off will affect the University's business.

Please note that the University can refuse a request for time off if it is thought unreasonable.

- 30 The public duties that are covered by this Policy are listed on the Government website at <https://www.gov.uk/time-off-work-public-duties> as follows:
- a magistrate (also known as justice of the peace)
  - a local councillor
  - a school governor
  - a member of any statutory tribunal (e.g. an employment tribunal)
  - a member of the managing or governing body of an educational establishment
  - a member of a health authority
  - a member of a school council or board in Scotland
  - a member of the General Teaching Councils for England and Wales
  - a member of the Environment Agency or Scottish Environment Protection Agency
  - a member of the prison independent monitoring boards (England or Wales) or a member of the prison visiting committees (Scotland)
  - a member of Scottish Water or a Water Customer Consultation Panel
  - a trade union member (for trade union duties) – please refer to the University's Time off for Trade Union Duties and Activities agreement.

### Moving Leave

- 31 If an employee is moving home the University will grant them one day's paid leave to make any necessary arrangements for their move. This should be discussed and agreed in advance with their Line Manager. If there are any further requests for moving leave (i.e. they move more than once in a rolling 12 month period), this will need to be taken as annual or unpaid leave. All requests should be made through Business Connect.

## Procedure

- 32 Any requests from employees for special leave should be applied for through the business connect portal enabling managers to consider and confirm whether a request is granted or rejected.
- 33 Any appeals arising from this policy should be raised using the *Employee Grievance Procedure*.

## Monitoring

- 34 The HR Directorate will log any complaints as a result of this policy and provide regular HR updates to the University Executive Team.