WORKING PRACTICES IN STUDENT SERVICES

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1. Introduction

This guidance is intended to promote a shared understanding across Student Services about acceptable practice so that we are being consistent and fair to all staff. The details within this document supersede any current local practices within all departments in Student Services. It must also be noted that the details within this document are not contractual and may be subject to change at any time by the University.

This guidance is supplementary to University guidance that can be found on a range of employment matters at:  http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/WorkingatReading/humres-workingatreading.aspx including information in HR’s Annual Leave guidance.

2. Working Additional Hours
It is understood that for essential and/or exceptional reasons there may be times when it is necessary for employees to work additional hours. It is important to note the contractual requirements in relation to working additional hours:

- Roles at grade 5 and below are eligible to receive time off in lieu (TOIL) for additional hours worked, or in exceptional circumstances, paid overtime (see below section entitled “Paid Overtime”). The University’s preferred approach is to compensate additional hours undertaken by employees with accrual of TOIL rather than with pay. TOIL allows employees to take paid leave to compensate them for the additional hours worked. TOIL must be agreed in advance of the additional hours being worked.
- Contracts for roles at grade 6 and above state that “There are no specified hours of work, but you will be required to work such hours as are necessary to carry out the duties associated with the post. Overtime is not payable.” It is reasonable to expect that this might require a few extra hours of work at times. If the additional hours are sustained and substantial it is important that you speak to your line manager to consider how you can manage your workload to reduce the need for sustained additional hours. Student Services however, recognise that there are specific occasions and circumstances when the use of TOIL may be considered, subject to relevant advanced agreement and approvals, and the Principles outlined below.

2.a) Time Off in Lieu (TOIL) Principles

An essential requirement of TOIL is that any additional hours worked that results in accrual of TOIL must be agreed in advance with your line manager (or their line manager) and it should be noted that additional hours worked without prior agreement and approval from your line manager will not be compensated.

The use of TOIL is subject to the following:

- The additional hours worked are required due to specific work-related needs and is not just because your normal work tasks were not completed, or that it suits you to work additional hours.
- TOIL will be granted normally equivalent to the additional hours worked – for example, if you work one additional hour, you will be compensated by one hour TOIL.
- Working through lunch is not considered to be additional hours and will not be compensated with TOIL. It is important that staff take a break at lunchtime.
- TOIL must normally be taken as soon as possible, ideally within two weeks of accrual, and must be agreed by your line manager. If your TOIL is building up then you may be asked to take it within a specified timeframe.
- Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that team members take TOIL in a timely manner for both the wellbeing of staff and to prevent build-up of TOIL which could then impact on service delivery.
- Line Managers should be aware of the impact of TOIL on the working patterns of part-time staff (e.g., if a 0.5 FTE member of staff builds up 2 full days of TOIL, this amounts to almost a week of TOIL for that individual).
- TOIL can be requested through the online holiday request system. Your line manager will need to inform the HR Co-ordinator for Student Services of the number of hours of TOIL that has been accrued for each occasion so this can be recorded. You can then request TOIL through the online request system and your line manager will need to authorise your request in the same way as for annual leave requests. You will receive a notification of whether your request for TOIL has been approved.
- For grade 5 and below only - TOIL will be approved for additional hours worked after the first 30 minutes above normal hours (36 hours per week for full-time hours for grade 5 and below) worked in a working week (this 30 minutes will be included in the claimed TOIL); and thereafter additional hours worked...
resulting in TOIL will be rounded down to the nearest 15 minutes. TOIL for grades 6 and above will be agreed on a case by case basis.

2.b) Paid Overtime

The University doesn’t normally compensate staff for working additional hours with pay. This happens only in exceptional and planned circumstances, and only with the prior agreement of management.

One exception is for part-time staff at grade 5 and below. Occasionally there may be a service need to ask a part-time member of staff to work additional hours. In this instance the member of staff could be compensated with pay at their normal rate of pay up to a limit of 36 hours per week where it is deemed that TOIL is not an appropriate option in the circumstances.

3. Guidelines for staff holiday arrangements

See the University guidance on annual leave above (link in Introduction above). For Student Services, the following guidelines should be noted:

- It is important that you do not make firm plans until your request for leave is approved.
- Holiday requests are made through the Employee Self-Service portal. These will be reviewed and, you will receive a notification of whether the request has been approved.
- Please talk to your line manager and colleagues when you are planning leave.
- Managers are responsible for ensuring that the Service is appropriately staffed to deliver the services and should be particularly mindful of busy periods when considering leave requests. They will check if there is sufficient cover within the team before being able to approve your leave request.
- Holidays should be booked sufficiently early for cover arrangements to be made beforehand. We recommend you request leave as far in advance as possible as you can always cancel if necessary.
- Staff should plan holiday periods away from important Service events or seasonal activities which they are involved in, as well as periods of short staffing (e.g. Welcome week, exams, Graduation ceremonies, Special Cases meetings). If you are considering leave at a busy time please be aware that this may be declined if it will leave the rest of the team in a difficult position with regard to covering the work.
- Team Managers may identify in advance periods which are anticipated to be particularly busy and when leave will therefore be restricted. They will let staff know well in advance and they will be mindful that staff need to have appropriate flexibility around when they can take their leave.
- Team Managers are responsible for managing leave requests over popular times, such as around Christmas/Easter or Bank Holiday weeks. They need to ensure that there is adequate cover for service delivery. This may for example mean there is a need to talk it through at a team meeting to agree a fair split across the team. If agreement cannot be reached within the team then the final decision for approval for annual leave requests lies with your line manager.
- When preparing to go on leave it is important that you identify if there are specific tasks that need to be covered in your absence and if there is material that other colleagues may need to access. It is also important that you inform colleagues that you work with regularly that you will be on leave and what they should do in your absence, i.e. who can help them.
• It is important to turn your out-of-office automated message on, providing the dates of your absence and information on who recipients should contact in your absence.

• Please note the University’s guidelines with regards to leave owing (i.e. carrying over leave not taken within the calendar year):

  "All employees are encouraged to take their full leave entitlement each year, and leave should only be carried forward into the next leave year in exceptional circumstances (which is limited to a maximum of one working week unless varied by local rules)."

  Therefore, leave accrued but not taken equating to a maximum of one working week at the end of September can be carried forward into the following year, however, this should be used up by the end of December of that year and should not be carried forward to the following leave year.

• Annual leave is pro-rated for staff leaving or joining part way through the year. You should contact HR to find out what your actual leave entitlement is if you are in this position.

• Annual leave entitlement is made up of three parts: personal holiday entitlement, public holidays and closure days and combined to give a total entitlement. Part-time staff and staff who are employed on a fixed-term contract (not on a secondment plus without a substantive permanent post) for less than a calendar year receive a pro-rata entitlement in line with their FTE. Any public holiday or closure day that falls on a normal working is normally deducted automatically from your available balance. These deductions are normally made at the start of each annual leave year, reducing your available balance, and show as "scheduled" in the online system until the date has passed. Please check with HR Operations if you are unsure whether these deductions have been made correctly.

4. Sickness

Managing sickness absence effectively is important for a number of reasons. We need to ensure that employees who are unwell are provided with appropriate support, as well as managing the reallocation of workload due to absence to ensure disruption to the service is minimised. We also must ensure that workload is not excessive for employees who are providing cover for colleagues who are absent due to sickness.

When employees are unwell it is important that the University is kept up to date about the absence. This ensures that the employee is advised appropriately of the support and related ill-health benefits at the relevant time, whilst also ensuring that contingency plans are put in place for delivery of the service.

Employees should therefore familiarise themselves with the Sickness Absence Reporting Procedures and Ill-Health Policy (link below) and also note the below:

• Absence due to sickness should be reported to your line manager, as soon as possible and before your normal start time for that day.

• Line managers will arrange cover for the duration of the absence; please be prepared to explain any key tasks or deadlines that need covering.

• Where at all possible it is important to be contactable to colleagues to provide essential information and guidance needed to cover your work.

• During sick leave individuals should maintain regular contact with a line manager to update on progress/recovery, in order that the team can plan how to cover your absence appropriately.

• See below for guidance on 'Working from Home" and sickness.

• A GP ‘Fit Note’ is required if you are absent from work for eight or more consecutive calendar days. A USP1 form needs to be completed for all periods of sickness. When you return to work you should
ensure that your return to work date is completed on the USP1 form and returned to HR so that your salary is calculated correctly. See reporting procedure guidelines for more details on how to report your absence.

- Please see the HR guidelines on sickness leave: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/policiesandprocedures/AbsenceandLeave/humres-sicknessabsence.aspx

5. Working hours

- Working hours are agreed with the line manager.
- Full time staff at Grades 3-5 work 36 hours a week, with a one hour unpaid break for lunch each day.
- Grade 6 and above are required to work such hours as are necessary to carry out the duties associated with the post.
- Lunch: to be agreed with the line manager and normally to be taken between 12.00 and 14.00. Staff working more than six hours are required by law to take a break of at least 20 minutes. It is preferred that all staff working more than six hours take a break of at least 30 minutes (unpaid and additional to the contracted working hours) during their working day. Each member of staff should agree a start and end time with their immediate line manager. Some flexibility around early/late starts and early/late finishes is acceptable, provided that:
  o The Service is adequately staffed during its full opening hours.
  o For grade 5 and below, that line managers are confident that all staff are working their full 36 hours (or part-time equivalent).

6. Personal Appointments

- Personal appointments such as a visit to the doctor, dentist, hospital clinic, solicitors etc. should, where ever possible, be made outside of normal working hours. However, the University recognises that this may not always be possible, and under these circumstances appointments should be made either first or last thing to minimise disruption to your normal working day.
- Employees must inform their line manager as soon as the appointment is made and agree how their time off will be treated. There is an expectation that time lost will be made up. It is at the manager’s discretion as to whether an employee is required to make up time, use annual leave or have unpaid leave. Line managers reserve the right to request sight of an appointment card.
- It is important for line managers to maintain, and be seen to be maintaining, a consistent approach to granting permission to attend appointments.

7. Flexible working
8. Working from Home

The general expectation is that staff will work at the University and not from home. However, the line manager may agree a limited amount of working from home, compatible with the demands of the job role and where the arrangement will not impact on other team members or the delivery of the service. The following guidelines and requirements must be noted:

- Where working from home is permitted, staff working from home must be contactable by phone and email.
- Any requests for working from home should be planned and agreed in advance with your line manager.
- Where working from home is permitted, staff must adhere to the IMPS policy on remote working: http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/imps/Remote-working-policy-CURRENT.pdf
- Staff should also be aware that they should undertake a workstation assessment of their home working arrangements to ensure this is set up appropriately.
- Working from home should not be undertaken as an alternative to sick leave. If a member of staff is too unwell to attend work but feels able to undertake work from home and has the necessary equipment and resources, it may be possible to discuss the appropriateness of working from home with your line manager. It should be understood that you would be expected to work your normal hours and be able to demonstrate the work you have undertaken on your return.
- Employees are not permitted to work from home to undertake primary care duties. Employees are required to be able to undertake full work duties when working from home.

9. Emergency Leave to Care for a Dependant

All employees have the right to a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to deal with an unforeseen emergency involving a dependant. Please refer to the University’s Emergency Leave to Care for Dependents policy at: