

WORKING SAGELY

Values for Working Together and Professional Behaviours in SAGES



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1. BACKGROUND

This document develops the University of Reading ‘*Values for Working Together and Professional Behaviours*’ for local practice within the School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science. The University document can be accessed at:

[http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/humanresources/humres-Values for Working Together and Professional Behaviours.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/humanresources/humres-Values%20for%20Working%20Together%20and%20Professional%20Behaviours.pdf)

The ‘*Values for Working Together*’ are a guide to behaviours that the University of Reading will recognise, reward and endorse. They inform our approach to promotions, Performance Development Reviews and rewarding staff. The behaviours highlight:

- Achieving results
- Demonstrating excellence
- Finding innovative solutions
- Embracing and enabling change
- Developing self and others
- Working together.

‘*Working Sagely*’ has been developed by the SAGES Committee for Staff Development & Wellbeing in response to requests for clear guidelines on the core values of the School and the expectations of how staff within the School can actively make a contribution.

For information on specific University policies and procedures, please see the HR website A-Z index:

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/A-Z/humres-HRatozindex.aspx?DSID=A>

2. SAGES VALUES

Mission statement

‘The School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science delivers world-leading research that focuses on people, their prosperity, resilience and heritage, and their relationship with the natural environment. Through the development of the individual and the collective in an inclusive, collaborative culture, the School aims to empower future generations by embedding new knowledge and innovative ways of working into learning, policy and practice.’

SAGES working culture

In SAGES we aspire to a culture of **equality** and **fairness** for all staff and students. The University emphasises the importance of *respect, responsibility and accountability* in working together to demonstrate ethical behaviour at all times. Within SAGES we will adhere to these values in achieving a high level of **professionalism, collegiality and ethical behaviour**.

The University Strategy for 2026 '*fosters a culture of strategic thinking and continuous challenge and renewal*'. In a working environment of continuous change, it is important for staff to understand the expectations of them and to be accountable to colleagues and students. We also wish to support a good work-life balance by accommodating flexible working where possible and by scheduling meetings to take account of core working hours (10.00-16.00) and part-time working. Where possible, scheduling of meetings through lunchtime should be avoided.

3. RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

All staff in SAGES are expected to work independently (as appropriate for their role) and show initiative to organise their own workloads to meet objectives, to make effective use of resources and to communicate clearly and respectfully. To meet the aspirations of our working culture it is important that:

- We each share personal responsibility to prioritise workloads effectively and seek assistance from supervisors/peers as necessary
- We engage with opportunities for continuous professional and personal development. We understand the overall goals of the University and the School and how we play a part in achieving these
- We are open to change and new practices and approaches.

Professional delivery of teaching

Student expectations of academic staff are set out in the *Reading Student Charter*:

- teach in an engaging and varied manner that inspires learning
- give timely and constructive feedback on work
- provide effective pastoral and learning support when needed
- respond, communicate and consult in a timely and effective manner
- recognise the student body to be a diverse collection of adults who are partners with an equally important voice in their learning.

High quality contact time with staff has always been important to students, irrespective of the fees they pay or the opportunities they have to assess the quality of their experience in NSS and PTES. In SAGES, we ensure the consistency and quality of student experience by:

- advertising office hours and providing sufficient opportunities for students to book meetings on a weekly basis during term time (the timing may vary between weeks)
- making every effort to arrange meetings with all Personal Tutees once per term and replying promptly to requests by Tutees for meetings or advice in addition to the regular termly meeting
- delivering all teaching assigned by the Head of Department as specified on the module description form, including agreed contact hours, assessment type and content

- maintaining up-to-date module information on Blackboard. This should normally include a Module Handbook (containing a teaching timetable, description of all assessments including deadlines and a reading list), and a link to the module MDF
- responding promptly to emails from students within 2 working days
- returning all summative assessment to students within 15 working days, via Department Teaching Offices.

In SAGES, we also expect all staff to play their part in the administration and enhancement of teaching and learning. This includes:

- attending Teaching Enhancement Group meetings regularly
- representing our teaching programme at open days, visit days, summer schools and outreach events, which will include occasional weekend and/or evening working
- participating in field classes, which will include occasional weekend working and/or working away
- attending at least one Graduation Ceremony each year. PGR supervisors should expect to support their graduating students by attending the relevant ceremony
- engaging in CPD, for example through training events organised by the HEA or CSTD
- updating module description forms on an annual basis
- participating in quality assurance procedures for teaching and learning, including peer review of teaching, student module feedback and comments from external examiners.

Availability and collegiality

Academic contracts do not usually specify fixed working hours. This has positive and negative consequences, allowing some flexibility but with working hours often extending into evenings and weekends.

Academic staff are expected to be present on campus to meet their basic work requirements for teaching, meetings, tutorials and administrative roles. They should be present in order to engage with the research culture, enable collaborative working and contribute to collegiality through mentorship of staff and students. Contribution to the academic community depends on meeting these expectations: failure to do so results in an increased burden for staff who are present and engage with all aspects of academic life.

- During the academic term, the usual expectation is for full-time academic staff to be present at the University for **four days** per week.
- One day per week during the academic term can be used for working at home on core work activities including research.

Exceptions will of course apply where staff are working away (eg on fieldwork or academic visits) or when they are working towards an important deadline for submission of research grants or outputs. Permission should be sought from your line-manager if you intend to be absent for more than one day per week on a regular basis during term time.

Academic colleagues are expected to attend all relevant meetings within their Department, School and the wider University. Apologies must be sent in advance with a brief explanation if attendance will not be possible.

Staff who are responsible for supervision of Post-Doctoral Research Assistants should plan in advance to ensure that the induction process runs smoothly. For example, they should be available to meet them on the first day (or make alternative arrangements) and consider provision of office space and computer.

Colleagues on Study Leave are not expected to attend all meetings or to offer office hours, but they are expected to notify annual leave and to remain contactable. They remain responsible for the supervision of their PGR students.

- Study leave covers the 11 weeks of the academic term: relief from administrative roles does not extend into the vacation periods.

Some colleagues will have a legal right to request flexible working on the basis of caring responsibilities. Where a formal arrangement is not in place, the normal expectation of attendance as set out above will apply.

Notification of absence

Academic staff should let their Departmental office know when they are away from the campus on field work, research meetings, annual leave or sickness. Support staff should inform their colleagues and their line manager when they are away from their working environment.

- Staff should obtain the permission of the Head of School if they are due to be away from the University for a period of more than 3 days during term time
- Out of office messages should be used when you are absence from the office, please ensure that the following text is included: *Please note if your email is a request under the Environmental Information Regulations or Freedom of Information then please resend your mail to imps@reading.ac.uk*
- If you are traveling overseas you must complete an 'Overseas travel form' in advance of your travel date and if required the relevant risk assessment must be approved
- When reporting sick, all staff should following the [Sickness reporting procedure](#) so that the School can ensure appropriate support in put in place to facilitate your return to work as soon as possible
- It is recognised that staff may occasionally need to take leave from work at short notice as a result of unforeseen occurrences or personal emergencies. If this occurs, please advise your line manager as soon as possible so they can agree the type of leave which would be appropriate to use under the particular circumstances in accordance with [University policies and procedures](#)

Annual leave

The leave year runs from 1 October to 30 September the following year. It is important to register your annual leave so that there is no expectation that you are available for

work during that period. In addition to Public Holidays and University Closures, the following entitlements typically apply:

- Full-time academic staff are entitled to **26 days Annual Leave** plus University closure days and Bank Holidays. Outside these days, staff are expected to be contactable whether on campus or working elsewhere
- Support staff are entitled to annual leave based on their length of service and FTE of employment. The basic leave is **21 days** for 1.0FTE plus University closure days and Bank Holidays; information in relation to leave entitlement can be found on the [HR webpage](#)

All requests for leave must be approved in advance by the relevant line-manager, who will not unreasonably withhold consent. All colleagues are encouraged to take their full leave entitlement each year.

4. PROFESSIONALISM & RESPECT

Teamwork, sharing and respect are essential to achieve our School's aspiration of fairness and equality for all. We wish to foster a supportive environment that is tolerant and does not seek to apportion blame but which aims to meet the highest standards in delivering excellence in teaching, research and enterprise.

Communications

All communications should be **courteous, fair and prompt**. Reasonable notice should be given for requests for assistance and deadlines for the completion of tasks.

Care should be taken in dealing with students and staff, respecting the boundaries of personal privacy. It is important to understand the needs of others and to take time to **listen and reflect** on their perceptions.

- There is no expectation that emails should be answered outside of normal working hours but where possible all enquiries should be acknowledged within two working days
- Email is not a medium in which to raise contentious or personal issues or to conduct extended debates; confidential matters are best discussed in person or by phone
- Keep your emails concise and copied only to essential recipients.

For good practice in use of emails see please see tips below:

1. Have specific times to check emails – email can hijack your day and stop you focusing on the important tasks you want to get done
2. Don't use email to avoid people – if there is potential for confusion, clear it up in person or over the phone. However, for less complex issues, a brief email will allow a busy person to answer at their convenience rather than be interrupted
3. Be mindful of delegation over email – if you leave important and/or time critical instructions for someone via email check in with them as soon as you can to check their understanding and acceptance of what you have asked them to do.

Email should not be used to publicly assign or delegate tasks that require prior discussion with the individual/s concerned

4. Aim to be as polite in emails as you would be face to face – without visual clues it is difficult to accurately interpret the meaning behind words. Be mindful that misunderstandings are much more likely and any offence caused, be it intentional or un-intentional, can escalate
5. Don't communicate over email in the "heat of the moment" – take 24 hours before replying and be mindful once email is sent it is out of your control
6. Consider who you are CCing emails to – normally CC is "for information only" and you should not expect individuals to respond. If you want a response include individuals in "to" field
7. Use clear succinct message titles which summarise the content in a few words – make it easy for recipients to prioritise, file and retrieve emails & ensure messages are to the point but are written carefully
8. Make use of priority rating – high should be for urgent action only, low should be for information only
9. Don't use "reply all" unless really necessary. Do you need everyone to be in on the conversation?

Fairness and transparency

SAGES has a dedicated Committee for Staff Development and Wellbeing which has representatives of Academic, Administrative, Technical and Research Staff. The School has embarked on an ambitious Communications Plan to enhance student recruitment and research impact.

Constructive feedback is given to individual staff through mechanisms including the Performance Development Review and Individual Research Plans (for academic staff). Staff achievements are celebrated and rewarded through the University's mechanisms (for example celebrating success vouchers and lump sum awards). For more details please refer to ["Rewarding Staff"](#).

Information in SAGES is shared on SID (our Shared Information Drive), where the terms of reference and minutes of all committees are posted. All School roles are advertised when they become available and expressions of interest are sought. Formal consultation processes take place before the appointment of the Heads of Department and Head of School.

The SAGES Workload Model is updated every year and staff are encouraged to apply for discretionary points if they have undertaken one-off roles or activities which are not represented in the standard roles. The annual calculation of the SAGES Workload Model is anonymised before circulation to all staff but individuals are able to compare their personal workload score with the overall spread.

Office Etiquette

If you are sharing an office or work space, please respect the privacy of others and observe good office etiquette.

- o Keep your workspace tidy and limit the number of personal effects

- Observe quiet working and refrain from holding confidential discussions in a public space
- Please take sick leave when appropriate – your colleagues don't want to catch your germs!

University premises should only be used to store items relating to work activities. Personal items should not be stored on our campus, in our buildings or external storage areas. This includes bicycles and other large items.

5. RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

SAGES supports ethical behaviour in the stewardship of our environment, facilities and resources. We are developing a Green Impact Plan and encourage staff to develop their environmental awareness.

Reflect on how to reduce energy use: turn off lights upon leaving rooms; shut down computers over night; turn off monitors when not required for 30 minutes or more.

Reduce use of paper: when sending items via the internal mail use old used envelopes; think before you print – it is necessary?; print and photocopy double-sided and black & white.

Reduce unnecessary travel: consider whether your journey is essential or whether you might use Skype or Conference Call; use public transport where possible.