Policy on attendance at work during severe weather and disruptions to public transport/air travel

1. Introduction

The University recognises that its staff may face difficulty from time to time attending work during periods of severe weather or when there are disruptions to public transport or air travel. Whilst the University is obviously committed to safeguarding the health and safety of its employees, it must ensure that disruption to its business remains minimal. The purpose of this policy is to outline the normal, minimal arrangements for treatment of staff who cannot attend work during periods of severe weather conditions or disruptions to public transport/air travel. It also set out the responsibilities of employees for attendance in these circumstances.

2. Scope

The policy aims to be applicable to a broad range of disruption, including severe weather such as heavy snow, disruption to public transport due to a variety of reasons, and disruption to air travel for reasons such as industrial action and the ash cloud caused by the eruptions from the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland in 2010. However, it is recognised that the policy cannot anticipate or address every potential event that might have a widespread impact on the ability of staff to attend or remain at work.

The policy is not intended to deal with sickness absence or unforeseen breakdowns in childcare arrangements, which fall within the scope of the University’s Policies on Management of Sickness Absence and Special Leave respectively.

3. Responsibility of employees

Staff should make every effort to attend work in all circumstances. However, they should not put themselves at unnecessary or inordinate risk when trying to do so.

4. Application

The policy provisions will be deemed to apply when there are severe weather conditions or disruptions to public transport or air travel that prevent an employee from attending work.

5. Normal provisions

5.1 Absences

If an employee has made all reasonable efforts to attend work but has failed to do so because of severe weather conditions or disruption to public transport or air travel, it is the responsibility of their line manager to make a decision as to whether the employee should:

- take the time as annual leave;
• make up the lost time at a later date;
• take unpaid leave;
• be allowed to work from home or remotely.

The decision will be taken after consultation with the employee.

5.2 Severe conditions or disruptions occurring during the course of the working day

Managers should normally decide on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate for employees to leave work early. In taking the decision, they should take appropriate account of the employee’s circumstances (e.g. distance to travel, mode of transport), issues of health and safety and business needs.

6. Closure of University

In extreme circumstances such as the weather conditions in the first week of January 2010, the President & Vice-Chancellor, or their designated representative, may decide to close the University at the beginning or during the working day, or late on the preceding day. In this event, following efforts to notify managers, a message will be sent out to staff by email and placed on the home pages of the University web site and StaffNet. In the event of closure during the course of a working day, it will specify the time at which most staff will be expected to leave the premises in order to ensure an orderly and managed closedown. Managers of staff who do not have access to email or the internet will notify them of the decision.

Updates about the planned re-opening of the University will also be placed on the home page of its web site. The University would also aim to use local media such as BBC Radio Manchester to update staff on developments.

Most staff will be paid as normal for the period of closure. Some staff engaged in what are deemed to be essential services (e.g. security, areas of catering, some laboratory areas) will be asked/required to work during the closure. In the event of closure, special arrangements will apply to their remuneration.

Staff who are able to work remotely will be encouraged to do so during the closure.

7. Employees stranded overseas due to air travel disruption

7.1 Employees stranded following a holiday

Members of staff stranded overseas due to air travel disruption who cannot return to work on the expected date should make every effort to notify their manager at the earliest opportunity. They should also make every reasonable effort to return to the UK at the earliest opportunity. The normal arrangements for dealing with an additional period of absence in such circumstances will be for the employee to:

• take the time as annual leave;
• make up the lost time at a later date;
• take unpaid leave;
• work remotely (e.g. checking and dealing with email).
The precise arrangements will be decided by the individual’s manager after consultation with the employee and taking into account their views and preferences. It may be possible to offer a combination of options.

7.2 Employees stranded following a business trip

The University will attempt to advise and/or assist members of staff who are unable to return to the UK after a visit overseas on University business. This may include advice on and/or assistance with accommodation and alternative transport. Such staff will be able to claim reasonable expenses associated with their late departure. This covers reasonable expenditure on accommodation and/or alternative means of travel. Staff will not be expected to take the time as leave.

Staff will be encouraged to undertake any duties that it is possible for them to perform remotely (e.g. checking and responding to email).

8. Review

The policy will be the subject of review after any major incident which affects staff attendance in order to consider its effectiveness. Such reviews will be conducted by the Major Incident Planning Group and the HR Sub-Committee. Final decisions on changes will be made by the HR Sub-Committee.