Special Leave Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 The University recognises that on occasion employees may encounter domestic crises which demand their attention and that in such circumstances it is reasonable to provide special leave with pay or unpaid leave in addition to normal holiday entitlement.

2 Scope

2.1. This policy applies to all employees at the University irrespective of length of service.

2.2. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment, and the University may amend it at any time.

3 Principles

3.1. The University will act sympathetically in situations envisaged by this policy and recognises the benefits to both the University and employees of applying this policy in a fair and reasonable manner.

3.2. Each request must be judged on its merits. Management will have discretion in determining whether special leave with pay or unpaid leave will be granted, whilst taking into account the legal right of employees to a reasonable amount of 'unpaid time off for dependants to deal with unexpected situations.

3.3 Each organisational unit will determine which managers can approve special leave requests.

3.4. The purpose of special leave and unpaid leave is to enable the employee to deal with the immediate issues and sort out longer-term arrangements if necessary.

3.5. Whilst operational needs and individual attendance records may be taken into account, special leave with pay and unpaid leave will not be withheld unreasonably.

3.6. Employees who are given special leave or unpaid leave will not be disadvantaged in relation to opportunities for promotion, training or other benefits or facilities.

3.7. Employees will not be entitled to payment in lieu of special leave.

4 Maximum amount of special leave

4.1. Employees may ask to be considered for up to five days special leave with pay within a rolling 12 month period. This amount is pro rata for employees who work part-time.

4.2. A reasonable amount of unpaid leave may be granted at the discretion of management.

5 Special leave with pay

5.1 Special leave with pay may be considered for the following situations. Exceptionally, special leave with pay may also be considered in some unusual or extreme circumstance not listed with the approval of a member of the People Directorate:

i.the unforeseen breakdown of care arrangements for a person for whom the employee has primary responsibility. This will enable employees to make arrangements for the provision of care for a dependant who is ill or injured; for example: where a child is unable to attend school/nursery due to sickness or in order to make urgent arrangements for the care of a parent.

5.1.1 In such situations, employees will normally be given paid special leave for one day. However, this

will depend on the circumstances and the amount of paid special leave the employee has already taken.

5.1.2 The employee will be expected to make alternative arrangements for any further days required, (e.g.) to request annual leave, unpaid leave, or seek agreement to work flexibly to make up the hours on another day if this is possible and depending on operational requirements.

ii. The serious illness of a domestic partner*, child or other person, whether related or not who plays a significant part in the life of the employee. In such situations, employees will normally be given paid special leave of between one to five days depending on the circumstances, including:

- the care requirements and the nature of the illness
- how much paid special leave they have already taken.

5.1.3 If further leave is required other options should be considered (in conjunction with the appropriate member of the People Directorate) such as unpaid leave, annual leave or flexible working arrangements.

5.2 Death of a close relative, which would include a spouse or significant partner[1], parent, brother, sister, grandparent or grandchild. In such situations, employees will normally be given paid special leave of between one to five days depending on the circumstances, including:

- the relationship to and with the individual,
- the employee's role in the funeral arrangements and where the relative lived, how much paid special leave they have already taken.

5.3 In the event of the death of their child or step-child, employees will be given special leave of ten days. For example:

- In general employees will be given a days' leave where the relative is a sibling or grandparent, and more where the relative is a spouse/partner, parent or child. However, the circumstances must be taken into consideration as each case may be different.
- If the funeral is far away or overseas this may be extended by one or two days,

[1] Partner includes same sex partners

- Where the employee is responsible for organising the funeral arrangements this may be extended by one or two days.

5.4 If further leave is required other options should be considered (in conjunction with the appropriate People for the organisational unit) such as unpaid leave, annual leave or flexible working arrangements.

6 Other unexpected or planned situations

6.1. Right to unpaid time off for dependants

Where it is not felt appropriate to grant paid special leave (for example, because the request does not meet the criteria in section 5 above or due to the amount of leave previously taken), consideration must be given to the individual's legal right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid 'time off for dependants' to deal with unexpected events.

Appendix 1 provides details of circumstances in addition to the ones listed in section 5 above where unpaid leave should be considered.

6.2 In all other situations employees will be expected to request annual leave or seek agreement to work flexibly to make up the hours on another day if this is possible and depending on operational requirements. In exceptional circumstances unpaid leave may be granted at the discretion of the manager.

Examples of such situations include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- car breakdown,
- there is a train strike,
- central heating boiler breaks down at home,
- a pet is ill,
- to be at home for a repair/service visit,
- taking a child or a relative to a planned medical appointment,
- a child's school is closed for a teacher inset day,
- to attend a funeral other than for close relatives as listed above.

7 How to apply for special leave

7.1. For unexpected / emergency situations employees must contact their manager as soon as possible on the day that the leave is required to explain their situation and request leave.

7.2. Leave will not be unreasonably refused as it is appreciated that the employee has an emergency that they must attend to. Whether the leave qualifies for paid special leave or unpaid leave rather than annual leave can be discussed when the employee has dealt with the immediate crisis or as soon as possible on their return to work.

7.3. All requests for special leave must be made at the time (i.e.) at the latest on the individual's return to work.

7.4. In the case of death or serious illness, employees should inform their manager as soon as possible to explain the situation and request leave. Again, depending on the circumstances it may not be appropriate to discuss whether paid special leave will be granted at this stage as the employee may be too upset or not know how much time off, they need to take. However, this should be discussed as soon as possible. Employees may need to take a combination of paid special leave, annual leave and/or unpaid leave.

8 Reporting and recording special leave

8.1 Management should keep a local record of special leave requests and outcomes.

8.2 Requests should be submitted through Oracle Fusion. For further guidance on submitting a request, please refer to the Special Leave Knowledge Article.

8.3 People Services will process the request and issue confirmation in writing

9. Disputes

9.1 Any employee who disagrees with a decision made in respect of their request for special leave may seek redress through existing grievance procedures; however, it should be the objective of all parties to settle the matter via informal channels wherever possible.

9 Review

10.1 The arrangements for special leave will be kept under review to ensure that they effectively meet the needs of the University and employees. The University will make changes to this policy from time to time in consultation with campus Trade Unions.

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Appendix 1.

Time off for dependants

Employees have a legal right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid 'time off for dependants' to deal with unexpected events involving a dependant, such as:

- the circumstances already set out in section 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 of this policy;

- to provide assistance on an occasion when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted;

- to deal with an incident involving a child of the employee that occurs unexpectedly during a period when the child is attending school.

A dependant is defined as:

- the spouse or civil partner, child or parent of an employee;

- any person who lives in the same household as the employee other than as an employee, tenant, lodger or boarder;

- any other person who would reasonably rely on the employee for assistance if they fall ill or is injured or assaulted, or who would rely on the employee to make arrangements for the provision of care in the event of illness or injury; or

- in relation to the disruption or termination of care for a dependant, any other person who reasonably relies on the employee to make arrangements for the provision of care.