

1. Policy Objectives

1.1 From time to time employees may experience adverse conditions which impact upon their ability to attend work. Examples of such conditions are: extreme weather (such as snow or flooding); health epidemics (such as swine flu); public transport disruptions (such as strikes); petrol shortages; university facility closures (such as power failures or Health and Safety issues).

1.2 This policy is intended to provide guidelines to managers and employees on what procedures to follow in the event of such conditions; what time off will be given; what payments will or will not be made; and to highlight possible consequences of a breach of the policy.

1.3 Although the aim of this policy is to provide guidance for dealing with these events in a reasonable manner, it is also to ensure provision of an objective, consistent and transparent process. Hence the University undertakes to operate procedures under which such absence can be managed in a way that is non-discriminatory and fair to the person concerned, work colleagues and the relevant Department. The University is committed to addressing matters relating to such absence in a fair, confidential, lawful, timely and sensitive manner, and aims to act reasonably at all times, taking account of all the circumstances of the case.

1.4 The University also has a duty of care to its employees and will put in place reasonable steps to ensure that any procedures laid out in this policy are fully cognisant of this so that employees' health and safety are not at risk.

1.5 While the University will ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all its employees, employees are reminded of their duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions. This involves taking particular care when travelling to and from work in adverse conditions.

1.6 This Policy & the Procedure does not override or supplant in any form the provisions of the Charter & Statutes or other statutory rights

1.7 Any deliberate misuse or abuse of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

2. Eligibility

2.1 The policy applies to all employees of the University employed under a contract of employment.

2.2 The policy does not apply to contractors, third party suppliers, outsourced services, consultants or agency workers.

3. Responsibilities & Procedure

3.1 Employees:

3.1.1 You should make every effort to attend work in all circumstances, unless otherwise instructed by Aberystwyth University. However, Aberystwyth University is committed to the health, safety and welfare of its staff and does not expect staff to put themselves at significant risk when trying to attend work.

3.1.2 You should use your judgement if you are going to be late or unable to attend work.

3.1.3 You should be aware of any official (e.g. police) warnings relating to the conditions. If you judge, for example, that weather conditions or transport problems make it impossible for you to get to work you should contact your Head of Department/line manager or other designated contact as soon as possible to tell them about the circumstances as soon as possible on that day.

3.1.4 You may be asked to explain, where required, the reasons for being unable to attend and what efforts you have made or are making to attend work. You will be required to update your manager daily until your return to work. Failure to comply with this may be regarded as unauthorised absence. Heads of Department must firstly consult with HR and meet with the employee concerned to discuss the issue on their return to work, as outlined in 3.2.9.

3.1.5 You should discuss with your Head of Department, Manager or other designated contact possible alternative provisions for working, such as working from home; reduced hours during the day or other pragmatic alternatives.

3.1.6 You must discuss with your Head of Department, Manager or other designated contact contingency plans for covering your work, especially where it is of a critical nature (e.g. welfare of children / animals and /or plants; security; facility operation and maintenance) or impinges directly on others. It will be the responsibility of the line manager to implement any contingency plans.

3.2 Departments and Managers

3.2.1 Heads of Department should ensure that they and their staff are fully conversant with the policy and its application.

3.2.2 Heads of Department should ensure that all employees' absence is accounted for and agree with each individual employee alternative working provisions, where this is practical and reasonable to do so.

3.2.3 For employees who are unable to work due to adverse conditions Departments must have mechanisms to discuss the reasons with each employee and what efforts have been made or are being made to attend work. Departments have the discretion to allow paid time off, depending upon the individual circumstances of the case. The length of paid time off must be made clear to the employee, including any further review of this relating to ongoing adverse conditions. Departments also have the discretion, in agreement with the employee, to allow holidays to be taken, unpaid time off to be taken, or time off to be worked back.

Please note that Heads of Department can apply the Special Leave or Dependents' Leave policy, if the circumstances are relevant to those policies.

Heads of Department or their nominee must consult the HR Department for advice on the application of these policies. No deduction of pay can be made until consultation with HR and the employee have been conducted.

3.2.4 Heads of Department must have clear procedures in place for contingencies to cover absence from work of staff, especially in relation to critical staff (may need to refer to Business Continuity Provisions).

3.2.5 Managers must have clear lines of communication and delegation established in case of their absence, which are communicated to all staff so that employees know who to contact and what back-up procedures exist for alternative contacts.

3.2.6 In the event that the Vice Chancellor or nominee decides that part of the University's facilities will have to be curtailed resulting in staff being unable to work, employees affected must be notified and given paid time off, unless otherwise stipulated in their contracts of employment or unless there are alternative places of work available, including working from home. Ongoing communications relating to closures will be given on the University's website or employees can contact the University Switchboard for updates – Tel 01970 623111.

3.2.7 Where adverse conditions deteriorate during the course of a working day and the University has decided to close a Department or facilities, all employees must be notified and given paid time off, unless otherwise stipulated in their contracts of employment. Ongoing communications relating to closures will be given on the University's website or employees can contact the University Switchboard for updates – Tel 01970 623111.

If an employee has specific concerns about their personal arrangements, they should discuss this immediately with their line-manager. Immediate line managers should decide on a case-by-case basis whether it is appropriate for employees in their department to leave work early. When making this decision they should take into account the employee's circumstances (for example distance from home, mode of transport, responsibility for dependants), the employee's views and the needs of the University.

3.2.8 Heads of Department must address matters relating to absence under this policy in a fair, confidential, lawful, timely and sensitive manner, and aim to act reasonably at all times, taking account all of the circumstances.

3.2.9 Heads of Department, or their nominee, must arrange return to work interviews with individuals who have not followed procedure in consultation with HR. The outcome of these meetings may require further investigations to be conducted with the employee(s) concerned. The outcome of this discussion may result in disciplinary procedure being invoked.

3.2.10 Heads of Department must consult with the employee and HR regarding any decision relating to unpaid time off; or using holidays to cover this absence.

3.3 The Human Resources Department has responsibility for:

3.3.1 ensuring that all management and staff are fully aware of the policy, procedure and respective responsibilities.

3.3.2 the design and development of appropriate training and monitoring systems for the operation of this policy and procedure.

3.3.3 providing advice, guidance and support to line managers and or individuals to support the implementation of the Policy and Procedure.

4. Training & Briefings

4.1 Training and / or briefings on this policy and procedure will be provided by HR for all managers to ensure that there is a consistent approach and application throughout the University. Updates will be provided in response to changes in law and case-law, where appropriate.

5. Reporting and Payment

5.1 The Human Resources Department will maintain records, based on information received from managers, indicating the duration and stated reasons for all periods of unauthorised absence and / or authorised unpaid absence under this policy. The information will be used as the basis for calculating any payments due; to monitor absence levels; and to indicate where further action may be needed.

5.2 Employees on Grade 1 + 2 who will be paid for absence of one week or more under this policy will have their pay calculated according to agreed average earnings provisions in the National Framework Agreement, namely at a rate equivalent to their average earnings, including voluntary overtime. This payment rate will be calculated using an average over the previous 12 month period.

6. Policy Review

6.1 Human Resources will co-ordinate a review of this policy in order to maintain compliance with legislation and good practice. The review will be undertaken in liaison with the recognised trade unions and any proposed amendments will be submitted to the appropriate relevant committee, University Executive and Council if required.