

# ANNUAL LEAVE GUIDANCE

## Guide to requesting, approving and taking annual leave

### 1. About this guidance

As part of moving to recording annual leave within Employee Self Service (ESS) the University has put in place consistent and standardised guidelines and arrangements for all employees at the University. Managers have an important role in making local decisions about leave arrangements, but an online system makes it simpler to set parameters and rules that can be applied consistently to all staff. Most support staff in the University already have paper-based systems in place, they understand the local arrangements and there is a clear culture of requesting leave and having those requests approved (or not). This culture is less prevalent in the Academic & Research job family, across most Schools and Departments in the University.

It is recognised that academic staff (for these purposes this includes all staff involved in teaching and/or research) in many cases already work in a highly flexible way to deliver the requirements of their roles in respect of their research, teaching and other important dimensions of the job. This is recognised in part through the contract of employment which does not normally specify hours of work, or refer to a standard working day.

### 2. Annual leave entitlement

All employees are entitled to annual leave as set out in their contract of employment; most employees *take* their annual leave and some are *paid* for leave (e.g. sessional or timesheet casual). The leave year runs from 1 October to 30 September each year. In the first and last years of service, and for those on fixed-term contracts which end during a leave year, leave entitlement will be calculated in proportion to completed service.

Each School/Department will have its own local rules for the booking and taking of annual leave and some Schools/Departments will have restrictions on when leave can be taken. However, the general principles remain the same throughout the University:

- Employees should plan their leave as far in advance as possible.
- All requests for leave must be approved in advance by the relevant Reporting Manager (or his/her nominee), who will not unreasonably withhold consent.
- Employees in student facing roles should take the majority of their leave outside of term-time wherever possible.
- 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).

We strongly encourage staff to book their annual leave via Employee Self Service so they have an accurate record of when annual leave is taken. If staff do not use or engage with annual leave booking via ESS it will be assumed they have taken their annual leave during vacations and they will not be paid for any outstanding leave if / when they leave the University and carry over from one leave year to the next will be 0.

We may require you to take (or not to take) holiday on particular dates, including when the business is closed, particularly busy, or during your notice period.

For those employees who work very flexible hours, a normal working week might change from week to week or term-time vs vacation time. To reflect this, but to ensure that ESS reflects holiday in the most appropriate way, we use a standard working pattern, e.g. for full time academic and Professional & Managerial staff this is 7 hours per day, Monday to Friday and any leave that does not 'fit' within this pattern can be overridden.

If your remuneration normally includes variable elements such as commission or compulsory overtime, we will notify you separately whether such payments will be included in the calculation of your holiday pay. A decision to reflect certain elements of your remuneration in holiday pay on one or more occasions shall not give rise to an expectation on your part that it will be included on future occasions.

### **3. Bank holidays and closure days**

In addition to annual leave, all employees are entitled to paid time off for bank holidays and University closure days. Part-time staff have a pro-rata'd entitlement to these days. Within ESS, bank holidays and University closure days are deducted automatically at the beginning of each leave year. Where employees are required to work on a bank holiday or closure day and it is agreed in advance, managers may credit back those days via ESS for employees to book and use at another time.

### **4. Other types of leave**

There are a number of other types of leave that employees may request. These are not yet bookable via ESS (and should be done so via the current paper forms at present), but these types of leave will be made available to book online during 2016.

#### **4.1 Compassionate leave**

Compassionate leave is paid leave that allows an employee time off to deal with their personal distress and related practical arrangements, primarily, but not limited to, when a member of their family dies. It can also apply in instances of serious illness or injury.

The University of Reading acknowledges that bereavement and serious illness or injury impacts all individuals differently and the guidelines below are intended to show the minimum paid leave an employee is entitled to in different circumstances. It is acknowledged that not all employees will need to take the full allowance, and some employees will need additional time, depending on their relationship with the person and the circumstances of the death, illness or injury.

Compassionate leave can be granted by the Line Manager in the event of the death, serious illness or injury of an immediate relative or family member; the number of days is subject to the particular circumstances but is normally 3 days.

In cases where the circumstances involve the death of a child (and this includes children in respect of whom the employee is the adoptive parent and legal guardians and carers.), please refer to the Parental Bereavement Leave procedure for the statutory entitlement of leave.

One days' leave can be granted on the death of wider family members to facilitate attendance at the funeral.

In exceptional circumstances, leave may be granted on the death of someone outside the immediate family. These circumstances would include (but are not limited to) situations where the employee is responsible for funeral arrangements or has to travel abroad to attend the funeral.

An employee should notify their line manager of their need to take leave as soon as possible or, at latest, on the first day of absence. In exceptional circumstances, applications for leave will be considered after the first day of absence. Line managers have the right to exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances as outlined above. Leave days do not have to be taken consecutively.

Line managers will check whether the employee's religion or culture requires them to observe any particular practices or make special arrangements which would necessitate them being off work at a particular time. Employees should not assume that their line manager is aware of any such requirements and should draw this to their line manager's attention as soon as possible.

Line managers who are unsure of how to respond to a bereaved employee from a different culture should ask the bereaved employee about what is appropriate.

#### **4.2 Time off in lieu (TOIL)**

Where appropriate, and agreed in advance, employees on Grades 1-5 may work additional hours to cover busy period that they are then entitled to take as time off in lieu (TOIL) at a future date. This includes occasional weekend working such as Open Days or working during Welcome Week.

#### **4.3 Unpaid leave**

Some absence, either planned or unplanned may be unpaid and any periods of unpaid leave will affect pension contributions. Where possible and in advance of taking a period of unpaid leave employees should contact the [Pensions Office](#) for further advice. Unpaid leave must be reported to HR Operations using the [Unpaid leave form \(Word - 66KB\)](#)

#### **4.4 Study leave for academic staff**

Although the University has no formal system of entitlement to sabbatical leave, it recognises the value of such leave of absence in appropriate cases, in helping to maintain high standards of research and scholarship particularly when academic staff are subject to increasing pressure and demands on their time. Each Head of School is therefore expected to make arrangements within the School to enable every member of the established academic staff to receive study leave at a rate of one term in nine, as appropriate. Leave on this basis is therefore understood as the reasonable expectation of relevant staff.

## **5. Unplanned leave**

Occasionally, employees will need to take leave from work at short notice as a result of unforeseen occurrences, domestic or personal emergencies, personal appointment or transport problems. In order to enable employees to deal with these situations the University makes flexible provision for employees to take the necessary time off work, on either a paid or unpaid basis. Employees are not generally expected to cover unplanned absence by using their paid annual leave entitlement, although the use of annual leave may be appropriate in some circumstances and an employee may request this. When taking leave in accordance with these provisions it is essential to communicate fully with your Reporting Manager as to the nature and duration of the leave.

### **Sickness during periods of Holiday**

If you are sick or injured during a holiday period and would have been incapable of work, you may choose to treat the period of incapacity as sick leave and reclaim the affected days of holiday (plus bank holidays but not closure days) as long as you have an appropriate certificate to submit to the HR Operations team.

Employees already on sick leave before a pre-arranged period of holiday may choose to cancel any days of holiday that coincide with the period of incapacity and treat them as sick leave.

You will be requested to provide proof of sickness in these circumstances, for example by providing a fit note from a doctor. Dishonest claims or other abuse of this entitlement may be treated as misconduct under our disciplinary procedure.

## **Long-term sickness absence and holiday entitlement**

Holiday entitlement continues to accrue during periods of sick leave.

If you are on a period of sick leave which spans two annual leave years, or if you return to work after sick leave so close to the end of the holiday year that you cannot reasonably take your remaining holiday, you may carry over any unused holiday over to the following leave year.

Carry over under this rule is limited to your paid holiday entitlement in accordance with your employment contract (plus bank holidays), less any leave taken during the holiday year that has just ended. It does not include closure days. If you have taken your paid holiday entitlement plus bank holidays by the end of the year, you will not be allowed to carry anything over under this rule. If you have taken less than your paid holiday entitlement plus bank holidays, the remainder may be carried over under this rule.

Any holiday that is carried over under this rule but is not taken within 18 months of the end of the holiday year in which it accrued will be lost.

Alternatively, you can choose to take your paid holiday during your sick leave, in which case you will be paid at your normal rate.

## **Family leave and holiday entitlement**

Holiday entitlement continues to accrue during periods of maternity, paternity, adoption, parental or shared parental leave (referred to collectively in this document as family leave)

If you are planning a period of family leave that is likely to last beyond the end of the holiday year, you should discuss your holiday plans with your manager in good time before starting your family leave. Any holiday entitlement that is not taken before starting your family leave can be carried over to the next holiday year.

For the avoidance of doubt this covers your full holiday entitlement, including bank holidays and closure days. Please refer to the relevant family leave policy to check any rules relating to when this entitlement must be taken.

## **Ensuring worklife balance**

The proliferation of mobile technology makes the boundaries between 'working' and 'not working' more fluid. This can be advantageous to people who are working flexibly, but a feeling of being always 'connected' can be a negative feature.

It is important that staff are given time to take a full break away from work and it is recommended that all staff use their full holiday allowance each year. Staff can use ESS to record holiday to ensure that they are actually taking their holiday entitlement. Whilst on holiday they should also use the 'Out of Office' email function to alert people to a delay in response. It is encouraged not to check or respond to email whilst taking annual leave.

All employees at the University are able to request flexible working arrangements - a flexible approach to working normally reaps benefits for both employer and employee. There are many different ways of structuring working patterns including, but not limited to, the following: part-time working; term-time only working, flexible working hours, compressed working hours, annualised hours, job sharing, working at or from home.

## **6. Leaving the University**

When you leave the University you may be required to use any remaining holiday entitlement during your notice period. Alternatively, you will be paid in lieu of any accrued but untaken holiday entitlement for the current holiday year to the date on which you leave, plus any holiday permitted to be carried over from the previous years or as required by law.

We strongly encourage employees to book their annual leave via ESS so they have an accurate record of when annual leave is taken. It is vital they keep a record of their annual leave so any outstanding, untaken annual leave can be paid to them when they leave the University, if this is appropriate. If employees do not use ESS it is assumed they have taken their annual leave and they will not be paid for any outstanding leave when they leave the University.

If when they leave employment, an employee has taken more days of leave than they have accrued up to their final date of employment, a deduction will be made from their final salary payment.

For those employed on a fixed term basis, it is normally expected that they take all accrued annual leave before the expiry of their contract.

In order for annual leave balances to be calculated for an employee's final salary instalment, managers will need to ensure that the ESS leave record is up to date for that employee and that all holidays have been booked and authorised through ESS.