

SPECIAL LEAVE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

In addition to annual leave, there are a number of occasions on which the University of Suffolk may grant leave, with or without pay. This document summarises our approach to requests for time off for reasons not covered in other policies.

In considering requests for special leave, managers will take into consideration business needs as well as the priorities of the staff member concerned.

All requests for special leave must be submitted to line managers. Requests may be made by e-mail or using the [Special Leave Application Form](#). Details of approved or unapproved leave requests must be forwarded to the People & Organisational Development (POD) Department for recording and monitoring purposes.

This policy addresses a range of different circumstances. In the event that a particular situation is not covered by this policy, line managers will take a reasonable approach to requests for leave and are encouraged to consult the POD Department before making decisions.

2. PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

We recognise that dealing with bereavement is difficult and is among the most devastating events that an employee can face. We are committed to supporting staff coping with the loss by ensuring that members of staff can take bereavement leave.

Employees have a right to take paid Parental Bereavement Leave for up to 3 weeks in the event of a death of a child (regardless of age).

Whatever the length of service members of staff may take the bereavement leave as:

- A single block of three weeks; or
- Separate one week blocks at different times.

A bereaved member of staff can take Parental Bereavement Leave at any time from the date of the death of their child until 56 weeks after of the date of death. This lengthy period recognises that, as a bereaved parent, you may need some flexibility as to when to take the leave, as around the first anniversary or birthday. Recognising the need to provide bereaved members of staff with support, we will continue to pay normal pay during Parental Bereavement Leave.

3. BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

In the event of the death of an immediate family member, members of staff may be granted 5 days paid leave. An immediate family member is defined as a:

- Spouse or civil partner
- Partner
- Parent (including step parent)
- Child (covered in section 2 above)
- Sibling (including step sibling)
- Grandparent
- Grandchild

Recognising the need to provide bereaved members of staff with support, we will continue to pay normal pay during bereavement leave.

4. COMPASSIONATE LEAVE

Line Managers may grant up to 5 days' paid compassionate leave in the event of the serious illness of a close relative. The term close relative generally may be taken to include: husband, wife, civil partner, long-term life partner, child, parent, sibling, parent in law.

Additionally, we recognise that staff may be grieving following the death of an individual who is not an immediate family member, but with whom the member of staff may nevertheless have a close relationship, for example an aunt, uncle, cousin or close friend. If this is the case the member of staff may request compassionate leave and it will be up to line managers have the discretion to grant compassionate leave on a case by case basis. The decision will depend on the circumstances, taking into account issues such as:

- A closeness of your relationship with the deceased
- Any obligations towards the deceased (for example if you are responsible for arranging the deceased's funeral)
- Travel required (for example if you need to travel a significant distance to be with relatives); and
- Any bereavement requirements in relation to religion, such as an extended period of mourning (with the onus on the member of staff to tell their line manager about these requirements).

The relevant Executive member may grant up to a further 5 days' paid leave, taking into consideration the circumstances of the case, the availability of annual leave and the opportunity for flexible working.

Sometimes, the circumstances giving rise to compassionate leave may result in the staff member being absent due to ill health; in this situation the usual certification arrangements will apply. Managers seeking to support a staff member during a period of personal stress, may also consider other supportive measures, which might include flexible working, unpaid leave, or referral to Occupational Health. The POD Department may be called upon to offer advice, guidance and information in these circumstances.

5. DISABILITY LEAVE

As part of our commitment to provide reasonable adjustments to staff who have declared themselves disabled, we offer up to 10 days' disability leave (pro rata for part time working) per academic year which may be taken for reasons related to their disability.

The Equality Act 2010 states that a disability is a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to do normal activities usually for more than 12 months. Staff declaring a disability will be referred to our Occupational Health provider for confirmation of disability and for advice and guidance regarding appropriate adjustments that might be made to the workplace and/or job to support the staff member. If Occupational Health determine that a condition is a disability under the Equality Act 2010 then the individual will be entitled to Disability Leave.

For all instances of disability leave, staff or management must report this to the People & Organisational Development team by using the [Absence Form](#). Guidance can be found [here](#).

Disability leave shall not be recorded against sickness absence and will not count against entitlement to occupational sick pay. However, disability leave will be reviewed in accordance with normal monitoring procedures. Disability leave may be used on a planned basis (for rest, rehabilitation, specialist appointments or other purposes related to the staff member's disability) or on an unplanned basis. Staff taking unplanned disability leave must notify their manager of their absence as soon as possible on the first day of leave.

The University of Suffolk is committed to supporting people with disabilities to remain at work. University management will work with staff members to identify reasonable adjustments that may be made to the work place or to the job in order to achieve this aim. To this end, we may seek professional advice from other agencies, such as the Employment Service or the Occupational Health Adviser.

6. RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS & PILGRIMAGES

Reasonable unpaid time off may be granted to staff members who wish to observe a religious festival pertinent to their faith. Such time off must be arranged in advance with their line manager.

7. TRADE UNION DUTIES

The University of Suffolk's approach to supporting Trade Union representatives is set out in our policy entitled "Trade Union Recognition and Arrangements for Staff Consultation and Negotiation".

8. FERTILITY TREATMENT

The University of Suffolk will permit staff undergoing fertility treatment up to 3 days' additional paid leave per year. Staff wishing to take such leave will need to provide their line manager with a letter from a qualified medical practitioner confirming fertility treatment is recommended and a valid appointment card.

9. ELECTIVE SURGERY

Staff wishing to undergo elective non-essential surgery (such as cosmetic surgery) are not normally entitled to paid sick leave nor paid special leave for this purpose. However, should the surgery result in injury the usual sick pay arrangements will apply.

University of Suffolk Sick Pay Policy will apply in the case of any surgery that is recommended by a suitably qualified medical practitioner, and to surgery relating to bone marrow donors and to gender reassignment surgery.

10. TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT & EXAMS

Staff undertaking essential training will be granted paid time for this purpose.

Similarly, staff undertaking essential professional and other qualificatory courses will usually be granted paid time within their normal working hours.

Staff may be granted leave with pay to take exams arising from a course of study supported by the University of Suffolk. In addition, a half day of paid leave may be granted per exam. Requests for such time must be made in advance.

11. PUBLIC DUTIES

The University wishes to support staff holding public office or a public position, including Justices of the Peace, magistrates, elected members of local authorities or police authorities, prison visitors, members of a statutory tribunal, members of a relevant health body, school/college governors.

Staff undertaking such duties have a statutory right to “reasonable time off”, but there is no obligation for such time to be with pay.

Staff seeking time off for public duties must make prior application to their manager for any dates on which they wish to take time off for public duties. In considering such requests, managers will consider how much time off is requested, how much time off has already been granted for the duties in question, and the impact on the university’s business as usual.

Such time off will normally be without pay. Paid time may be granted in the case of staff holding very senior public positions, such as Council Leaders. Requests for such exceptional arrangements should be made in writing, before the start of the academic year, to the Director of POD.

12. MILITARY RESERVISTS

The Volunteer Reserve Forces consist of the Royal Navy Reserve, The Royal Marines Reserve, the Territorial Army and the Reserve Air Forces. Requests for unpaid leave in connection with the annual summer training period (usually two weeks) should be made in advance using the form. Employers are not obliged to grant such leave, but University of Suffolk line managers are encouraged to support such requests where it is feasible to do so.

In the event of the compulsory mobilisation of reservists for military operations, University of Suffolk reserves the right to seek exemption from or deferral of mobilisation. Such a request will be by exception; generally the university will seek to support mobilised reservists.

13. SPECIAL CONSTABLES

As a general rule, the university makes no particular provision for staff serving as Special Constables; such activities may be arranged outside of normal working hours. However, in the event of a local civil emergency resulting in greater demands being made of Special Constables special leave requests will be considered. Such requests should be made in writing to line managers and copied to the Director of POD.

14. SPORTING EVENTS

Staff representing their county or country may be granted paid leave to attend sporting events taking place during normal work time. Such requests must be made in advance to line managers.

15. JURY SERVICE AND COURT APPEARANCES AS A WITNESS

Staff required to perform jury service or to attend court as a witness will be released from work for the necessary period of time. Salary will be paid as usual, adjusted to reflect income received through the Court, which must be disclosed to the POD Department.

16. UNPAID LEAVE

For a variety of reasons, staff may wish to take a period of unpaid leave. Staff contemplating this for family reasons should refer first to the policies for Parental Leave, Time off for Dependents, and Flexible Working, which may be better suited to their circumstances.

Staff considering seeking unpaid leave are advised to discuss their needs with their line manager at an early opportunity. In considering such requests, managers will reflect on the reason for the request, the amount of any unpaid leave previously taken, the likely impact on the students and business as usual, and the feasibility of arranging cover. Requests for significant periods of unpaid leave (in excess of 2-3 weeks) will be discussed with the relevant Executive Team member and your People Business Partner may be consulted.

Periods of authorised unpaid leave will count towards the staff member's continuous service with University of Suffolk, unless otherwise notified. However, annual leave and other service related benefits will not accrue during unpaid leave. Prior to any period of unpaid leave, staff are advised to check the implications of the arrangements for their pension provision. The POD Department can provide further information.

Staff taking unpaid leave should ensure their manager is provided with contact details during their absence so they can be reached in the event of an emergency or if circumstances arise that may impact on their employment.

Requests for unpaid leave will not usually be granted for periods in excess of one year.

17. SECONDMENTS

Please see the Secondment Policy on My Suffolk for more detailed information.

Requests for a secondment may be considered for periods in excess of one year, where there are clear mutual advantages. The relevant Executive Team member and the Director of People and OD must be consulted prior to approval of a secondment.

18. DEVELOPMENT TIME

Please see Development Time policy on MySuffolk for more information.

Development time is intended to assist eligible academic staff in developing and maintaining their academic profile. Academic staff can take up to 18 days' paid development time (pro rata for part time contracts) in each full academic year (August to July).

Equality Impact Assessment