

**POLICY ON WORKING PRACTICE – MAJOR  
INCIDENT/EVENT/ADVERSE WEATHER**

March 2009

*Updated December 2012*

---

**HR DEPARTMENT**

---

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This policy outlines guidance in relation to the practice that should be applied in the event of a major incident or event such as adverse weather conditions whereby standard University operations are affected e.g. major transport issues, leading to extensive problems in terms of access to the University (i.e. closure of main routes). The impact of the event may result in reduced working, suspension of teaching or suspension of the normal operations of the University.

The University operates 365 days a year and 24 hours a day. Across the estate the University operates more than 4500 residences and within the academic Faculties, research continues throughout the year. Therefore the University needs to ensure the provision of support to all of these activities throughout the year regardless of the state of operation.

- 1.2 The policy covers aspects such as the steps that employees are required to take to try to get into work on time or otherwise. This guidance aims to ensure that staff who are unable to attend work, despite their best efforts, are treated fairly and consistently.
- 1.3 The authorisation to declare a reduced services period or day, or the suspension of normal services of the University will be taken by a member of the Executive Board following the escalation process within the Incident Management Plan in line with Business Continuity Plans.

**2 PROCEDURE**

- 2.1 A degree of flexibility will be required during periods of adverse weather or access problems. Staff and managers will be expected to act reasonably and understand that it will not be possible for the University to provide high quality information that will be relevant to all situations and personal circumstances. Unless specifically broadcasted to the contrary, the University will stay open where possible to ensure continuity of normal or reduced service.
- 2.2 If normal service is deemed impossible, the University may operate a reduced service for everything except 'essential services'. In this case staff will be notified by updates on the University website, email, automatic phone messages or direct contact from your manager. In some instances local radio may be used.
- 2.3 'Essential services' will be defined by Faculty/Departmental management dependent on the situation and requirement of the area for that day/period of time. This may be outlined further in departmental Business Continuity Plans.
- 2.4 Where staff are prevented from attending due to circumstances of adverse weather or access problems or reasonably believe that adverse weather or access problems exist, they must first check the University website, email and as a last resort phone the University. Staff should assume that the University is operating normally and if they cannot attend then they must notify their Faculty/Department as soon as is reasonably practicable, ideally within one hour of their normal commencement time. If as a result of the situation, staff are unable to make direct contact (by phone or email) with their manager or a Faculty/Department contact; this will be regarded as an extenuating circumstance. Absence that has not been communicated will be regarded as

---

**HR DEPARTMENT**

---

unauthorised absence (unless there are extenuating circumstances) and as such payment may be withheld.

- 2.5 Wherever possible, employees should speak directly with their line manager (who may themselves not be on campus), bringing issues relevant to that day's work to their attention.
- 2.6 In the event employees are unable to access their normal place of work or where the University declares a situation of "reduced service", they will be expected to continue working either from home or by working flexible hours as and when conditions allow. This may not be appropriate for all employees in all working environments and Departmental Managers will be authorised to use their discretion to manage any deviations from this principle. Such measures will help in reducing unnecessary levels of absenteeism and ensure work demands are met.
- 2.7 Where weather conditions show signs of worsening, the University will use publically available reports on road conditions etc before reaching a decision as to allowing staff to leave early.
- 2.8 During a period of adverse weather or where an incident is underway key staff are likely to be asked to work extra hours to provide support as required to keep the University operational. All employees are expected to keep a log of their working times and rest breaks during such a situation.

### **3 MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITY**

Under this policy, all managers will be expected to:

- 3.1 Treat all staff fairly and consistently;
- 3.2 Act reasonably;
- 3.3 Ensure that adequate communication takes place with their staff;
- 3.4 Have regard to the Health and Safety of staff and students, particularly where special conditions apply such as pregnancy or disability;
- 3.5 Support staff who work long hours to maintain services;
- 3.6 Ensure that essential services are maintained;
- 3.7 Provide relevant information (including details on examinations and important events scheduled to take place within the likely window of the event) up the line and where possible to the incident leader (normally the Silver Commander or their designate under the Business Continuity Plans);
- 3.8 Maintain an appropriately high level of productivity within their area of responsibility.

---

**HR DEPARTMENT**

---

**4 COMMUNICATION**

- 4.1 The University will endeavour to communicate access problems at the earliest opportunity. This will be done via the University website, email and/or local radio.
- 4.2 All staff should keep a note of the direct dial number for the University switchboard and their Faculty/Department. The main University number is 01483 300800. Website address: [www.surrey.ac.uk](http://www.surrey.ac.uk)

**5 ABSENCE OR LATENESS**

- 5.1 If an employee fails to attend work due to adverse conditions without any notification, the University reserves the right to treat the absence in the same way as any other unauthorised absence (refer to Disciplinary Policy).
- 5.2 In such a circumstance the University will investigate the employee's reasons for non-attendance before withholding pay. Issues of regularity and objective proof of the transport disruption may be relevant, as would the success of others in getting in from the same area.

**6 HEALTH & SAFETY ISSUES**

- 6.1 The University have a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees at work.
- 6.2 Employees are also under a general duty to take reasonable care of their own physical and mental health and safety, and that of others who may be affected by their acts at work.
- 6.3 The University will make allowances for those staff who work outside or have to drive as part of their job, in the event of adverse weather conditions. In such circumstances the University reserve the right to re-allocate these employees to other tasks temporarily.

**7 PAYMENT**

- 7.1 It is not envisaged that essential services will ever be suspended.
- 7.2 Where staff are unable to attend for work because of adverse weather or similar, provided reasonable efforts are made to work remotely or to work the hours in on a flexible basis when conditions allow, no pay will be deducted.
- 7.2.1 Staff who attend for work for essential operational activity may be eligible for an enhanced rate of pay. This will be reviewed and agreed with departmental management and HR.
- 7.2.2 Where staff do not attend in these circumstances they will be expected to work from home (whether this be through remote internet access or completion of other activities as agreed by the Line Manager e.g. reviewing of documents,

---

**HR DEPARTMENT**

---

manuals etc). Where this is not possible, the University expects staff to agree from alternative options as outlined in 7.2.3.

7.2.3 When the University is open and able to receive staff, staff are expected to attend. Those staff who cannot attend will be expected to do one of the following:

- Work from home;
- Take further days as annual leave;
- Take further days as unpaid leave;
- Make up the hours on return to work.

All of the above options must be agreed with the Line Manager.

7.3 Staff who are on leave (annual, maternity, sickness etc) will not be entitled to a day off in lieu in the event the University is closed for academic activity.

## **8 CHILDCARE/CARING RESPONSIBILITIES**

In some cases staff may be unable to return to work even when the University is operating normally, due to the wider impact on childcare or caring arrangements e.g. snow fall could lead to school closures of differing time lengths. In this situation the Domestic Leave Policy will apply.

## **9 GRIEVANCE**

Any member of staff who is aggrieved about the way they have been treated under the Policy may pursue their complaint through the Grievance and Disputes Procedure.

## **10 MONITORING AND REVIEW**

This Policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if significant changes are required.

**11 OTHER POLICIES**

The following policies may be of some relevance to this document:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance and Disputes Policy
- IT Guidance on Accessing Email Off Campus and Remote Access
- Domestic Leave Policy