

DEPENDENCY CARE, COMPASSIONATE AND BEREAVEMENT LEAVE POLICY



This document sets out the University's policy governing dependency care, compassionate and bereavement leave policy.

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Officer Responsible for Policy/ Procedures	Richard Billingham, Executive Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development
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1. INTRODUCTION

The University recognises the benefits from supporting family friendly initiatives and assisting employees to achieve a balance in their work commitments and their life outside of work. As such, it is recognised that from time to time employees will need to request leave to attend to domestic, personal and family matters of an urgent or unforeseen nature.

- 1.1 The policy is not intended to be prescriptive and therefore managers are expected to apply an element of discretion, taking all of the circumstances into consideration. Each request under this policy should be treated on its own merits as the circumstances under which leave is requested may vary considerably with each case.
- 1.2 This policy covers the following categories of leave and incorporates the statutory rights of employees, under the Employment Relations Act 1999 and further extended entitlements agreed by the University Council:
 - Dependency Care Leave
 - Compassionate Leave
 - Bereavement Leave
- 1.3 In considering compassionate and bereavement leave, the University is keen to support the wellbeing of employees who suffer such losses. It is acknowledged that grief impacts individuals differently and therefore further support may be needed in addition to time away from work.
- 1.4 Should there be an ongoing requirement for time off, the manager may consider instead agreeing to temporary changes to working patterns to facilitate this, and/or using annual leave where circumstances allow.
- 1.5 Advice and further guidance may be obtained from Human Resources.

2. POLICY PRINCIPLES

This procedure has been agreed by the Joint Unions Consultative Committee in consultation with the University.

Line managers should ensure that they positively promote this Policy and take responsibility for its implementation within their work area.

This policy sets out the rights, entitlements and obligations of employees who wish to avail themselves of the benefits provided by the University.

Employees are advised to seek advice from their designated Human Resources to ensure that they are fully informed about all aspects of the policy.

3. SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy will apply to all staff.

It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that the procedure is followed and that employees are aware of this procedure. All employees can access the policy on the Aston University website.

4. ELIGIBILITY

- 4.1 The provisions made within this agreement apply to all employees irrespective of length of service, hours of work, job family or grade.

5. CATEGORIES OF LEAVE

5.1 Bereavement Leave

The purpose of Bereavement Leave is to allow staff time away from work due to the death of a close relative or other person whether related or not who plays a significant part in the life of the member of staff.

These guidelines are to ensure that bereavement leave is granted in a fair and equitable manner across the University, at the same time recognising that arrangements need to be flexible to meet individual circumstances. For example, the nature of relationship/s and the required observances of different religions, cultures and beliefs vary. In circumstances where extensive travel or long periods of mourning are required, requests for additional leave will be given full and sympathetic consideration, and managers should consider an extended period of paid or unpaid leave.

When an employee's own health is considered to be adversely affected by bereavement, a short period of sick leave might be more appropriate; where this is the case the Sickness Absence Policy, Procedures and Guidelines should be followed.

The University will support employees through this process and ensure that all sources of support are explored.

a) Close Relative

The basic provision for time off during this period have been identified as follows:

- 3 days upon the bereavement of a close relative where the employee is responsible for funeral arrangements. This includes 1 day for attendance at the funeral.

b) Distant Relative

The basic provision for time off during this period has been identified as follows:

- 1 day upon the bereavement of a more distant relative to enable attendance at the funeral.

c) Parental Bereavement Leave - Death of a Child (under the age of 18)

This policy sets out the employee's statutory right to bereavement leave, but the University will ensure that all sources of support are explored.

Employees will be entitled to a period of two weeks parental bereavement leave upon the bereavement of a child under the age of 18. The employee will receive full pay during this period.

In order to be eligible for paid leave, employees must be:

- the parent; or
- the partner of the child's parent, who lives in an enduring family relationship with the child and their parent; or
- the "parent in fact", which means that, for a continuous period of at least four weeks before the child passed away, they have been living with the child and had "day-to-day responsibility" for the child (but who is not being paid to look after the child); or
- an adoptive parent; or
- a parent of a child born through surrogacy; or
- a parent who has suffered a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

d) Taking parental bereavement leave

Parental bereavement leave may be taken as:

- a single block of two weeks; or
- separate blocks of one week at different times.

The leave will need to be taken during the period of 56 weeks from the date of the child's death to allow time off for difficult events such as birthdays or anniversaries.

The notification requirements for employees requesting parental bereavement leave are:

- During the first seven weeks employees need to advise managers as soon as possible of the need to take leave or at the latest on the first day of absence.
- From weeks eight to 56, the employee must give at least a week's notice.
- Leave can be cancelled or re-arranged with the same degree of notice as above.

5.2 Dependency Care Leave

A dependent is defined as the employee's spouse, child or parent, or someone living in the same household, for example a partner (it excludes tenants or employees). It also includes someone who relies on the employee for primary assistance such as an elderly relative.

Whilst each employee is responsible for ensuring that they have an appropriate care structure in place to meet their personal needs, the University will endeavour to assist in

circumstances where unavoidable matters might arise or where additional unforeseen pressures arise for which time off may be required.

Employees have the right to take as much unpaid time as is reasonable in order to deal with an immediate issue. Managers have the discretion to grant one to two days paid leave to employees. This is intended to enable employees to deal with an emergency involving a dependant or in the event of an urgent domestic/personal problem and may include:

- to provide assistance when a dependant falls ill, is injured or assaulted, or gives birth;
- to make arrangements for the provision of care for an ill or injured dependant;
- an unexpected disruption or termination of care arrangements of a dependant, or the breakdown of those arrangements; and / or
- to deal with an incident that involves their child, where it occurs unexpectedly while the child is at school/other educational establishment, such as sickness.

5.3 Compassionate Leave

The University will be sympathetic to a reasonable request for time off to deal with critical domestic emergencies not involving dependants. This leave is intended to be a short-term solution to enable employees to remedy their individual situation

Time off with pay may be granted (at a manager's discretion) of up to two days, to enable immediate arrangements to be made to cope with, for example, a burglary or fire at home.

Leave can also be considered for other cases of sudden and serious personal difficulties, which cannot be anticipated and are extremely stressful. Managers are expected to manage requests taking account of the impact on service delivery.

6. PROCEDURE IN RESPECT OF DEPENDENCY/COMPASSIONATE LEAVE

- 6.1 Employees must notify their manager as soon as reasonably practicable should they wish to request leave under this policy. Requests will be considered sympathetically and in confidence.
- 6.2 Employees should inform their manager of the reason for leave and its likely duration, making arrangements to deal with the emergency and return to work as soon as possible.
- 6.3 Employees will be granted a reasonable amount of leave in order to deal with an emergency. In the event that an employee needs to take leave on a longer term basis, they may need to make a request for parental leave or annual leave.
- 6.4 Managers are responsible for recording all types of leave taken by the employee.
- 6.5 The number of paid days' leave will be determined by management discretion and will be considered on the individual circumstances of each case.
- 6.6 Managers should adopt a fair, consistent and sympathetic approach in applying this policy and ensuring they have taken all the facts in to consideration and discussed the matter with Human Resources, where appropriate

7. SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES

- 7.1 The Employee Assistance Programme is available for employees who require additional, confidential support during difficult times. PAM assist provide a 24 hours, 7 days a week, confidential telephony service, providing practical assistance on a range subjects to employees.
- 7.2 Further information is available on the University Wellbeing intranet webpage.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 8.1 Information regarding the University's commitment to work-life balance can be found in the **Work-Life Balance Policy Statement**.
- 8.2 Associated University Human Resources Policies and Procedures:
- Parenting at Aston Agreement
 - Parental Leave Agreement
 - Flexible Working Agreement
 - Annual Leave Agreement.
 - Sickness Absence Policy, Procedures and Guidelines
- 8.3 These documents can be accessed on Aston's Human Resources Web Pages at www.aston.ac.uk/hr or are available from Human Resources



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