



Aston University

# Work-Life Balance Policies- Management Guidelines

Aston University is committed to providing working conditions which enable employees to achieve a work-life balance whilst fulfilling the business needs of the University. There are a number of work-life balance and flexible working arrangements in place. These guidelines focus on the main policies and identify those aspects of the policy which are mandatory and those which are discretionary. In applying discretion, managers need to balance the immediate needs of the service with the need to create and maintain a diverse and effective workforce.

The main Policies and initiatives are:

1. Part-time and Term-time Working
2. Flexible Working Hours
3. Job Share Arrangements
4. Maternity Leave Agreement
5. Paternity Leave Agreement
6. Parental Leave Agreement
7. Compassionate Leave/Emergency Care of Dependants
8. Working Time Policy

Full details of these policies are available from Human Resources. The guidelines below highlight the key points.

## 1. Part-time and Term-time Working

The University offers a range of part-time and term-time posts in line with the needs of the service. Additionally, full-time employees may request to work part-time at particular points in their career. Managers should carefully consider such requests taking into consideration:

- operational needs

- the needs of the employee
- whether the post can be split
- whether workloads or responsibilities can be allocated differently
- whether more flexible working hours can be agreed if part-time work is not possible
- whether an alternative part-time post may be available

Where it is agreed that the employee may undertake part-time employment Personnel should be informed of the decision, the agreed hours and the date of commencement of the change.

If the manager decides that part-time work is not an option they should contact their designated Personnel Officer to ensure that all options have been considered and that the reasons for the decision are clear and recorded.

From 6<sup>th</sup> April 2003 parents of children aged under 6 or of disabled children aged under 18 will have the right to apply to work flexibly.

They will be able to request :

- a change to the hours they work
- a change to the times they are required to work
- to work from home

Employers will have a statutory duty to consider their applications seriously. The University will issue guidance on this in February 2003.

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## 2. Flexible Working Hours

The Flexible Working Hours Scheme is operated in a range of University Departments. This enables employees to have some control over their working hours within the guidelines laid down within the scheme and provided that the needs of the service are met.

- There are 2 options within the scheme which set down the bands of core and flexible hours within the working day. These are outlined in the Flexible Working Hours Scheme.
- The Scheme works in four weekly periods. Staff are able to carry forward from one period to the next a credit balance of no more than 11 hours and a debit of up to 5 hours.

- Employees may take up to 1.5 days (11 hours) flex holiday in any one accounting period with the prior permission of their line manager
- Visits to doctors, dentists or the hospital should be arranged, wherever possible, during the flexible working times. If this is not possible, an appointment during core time may be made with the prior approval of the manager. Staff must make up time in either circumstance. Staff should clock in or out as appropriate. Any visits made in core time must be authorised by the manager.
- In exceptional circumstances, and at the Manager's discretion following consultation with Personnel Services, the time lost may be credited. Such circumstances will include ante-natal appointments, those staff suffering from a long term or chronic illness who need to attend hospital regularly over a long period of time, or staff who are required to attend hospital for a specific course of treatment.
- Departments who operate this scheme are required to use the computerised Time Recording System to provide a record of hours worked.
- Flexible working needs to be managed within Departments and Sections so that key service points are staffed at the relevant times. In most cases such arrangements can be agreed between the relevant employees but where this is not possible managers will need to take a decision about how the service is covered.
- Should any problems arise in this process they can be discussed with your HR Business Partner.

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### 3. Job Share Arrangements

A job share is a formal arrangement where two people voluntarily share the responsibilities of one full time post, with the salary and leave entitlement allocated on a pro-rata basis.

Full details of how Job Share can be arranged are to be found within the Job Share Guidelines but key points are as follows:

- Job Share requests can be received either through applications for vacant posts or through applications from existing employees to job share their current post.
- The pattern of work and the respective allocation of tasks and responsibilities can be arranged in line with the needs of the service and the individuals concerned and every effort should be made to ensure that these are done equitably.
- The Head of School/Department will make decisions concerning requests for job share in consultation with their designated HR Business Partner
- There is no automatic right to job share but an unjustifiable refusal to allow a job share may be viewed as discriminatory under the Sex Discrimination Act.
- The University reserves the right to review the job sharing arrangement should it cease to meet the needs of the service. Such a review would be carried out in consultation with the job share partners and with the designated HR Business Partner

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## 4. Maternity Leave Agreement

Aston University has a Maternity Leave Agreement which sets out both Statutory and Contractual/Occupational benefits for pregnant employees. The precise entitlements will depend on the employee's length of service. However, managers need to be aware of the following:

- All pregnant employees have a statutory right to time off to keep appointments for ante-natal care
- Those employees who qualify for occupational maternity leave should notify the employer at least 13 weeks before the expected week of confinement that they are pregnant, when the baby is due and that they intend to return to work for the University
- Although the period of maternity leave is statutory, the University may, at its discretion, extend the period of unpaid leave in cases of hardship
- Maternity leave does not affect people's entitlement to annual leave which will accrue during this period, nor annual increments, nor pension rights
- At the end of the maternity leave the employee will have the right to return to their own job or a similar appropriate job. In either case the terms and conditions will be no less favourable than those that would have applied should they not have been absent
- It is the responsibility of the Head of School or Department or their nominee to undertake a risk assessment when they are notified of an employee's pregnancy and take action to resolve any problems which may be identified in the nature of the job
- New maternity rights are coming into place for women whose babies are due on or after April 6<sup>th</sup> 2003. The new University guidelines will be issued in February 2003. In the meantime, please contact your HR Business Partner if one of your employees is likely to be affected by the new regulations.

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## 5. Paternity Leave Agreement

The University allows five days' paid paternity leave per child to all fathers (natural or adoptive) who have been continuously employed by the University for a period of 12 months before the expected week of confinement or, in the case of adoptive fathers, before the expected week of placement.

- The leave must be taken from the actual date of birth or placement of the child.

- However, in certain circumstances, the Head of School or Department may use their discretion in allowing a delay in the start of the paternity leave. This would typically be requested when mother and child are unable to leave hospital for a period and require care on their return home.
- In cases where fathers need extended leave at the point of the birth or placement of the child their request should be dealt with under the Parental Leave Agreement.
- New paternity rights are coming into place for prospective employees whose babies are expected to be born on or after April 6<sup>th</sup> 2003. The new University guidelines will be issued in February 2003. In the meantime, please contact your HR Business Partner if one of your employees is likely to be affected by the new regulations.

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## 6. Parental Leave Agreement

Parental Leave is the statutory right of any parents of children under and up to the age of 6 years. Key characteristics are as follows:

- Employees should have worked for the University for 12 months to qualify
- The full entitlement is 13 weeks for each eligible child
- A parent may take up to 4 weeks in any one year
- Parental leave may be taken in single days or in complete weeks
- Parental leave is unpaid
- Parents should give at least 21 days notice of their intention to take parental leave
- If the Head of School/Support Service Department considers that the absence would be unduly disruptive then he/she can postpone parental leave for up to 6 months but must give reasons in writing for doing so

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## 7. Compassionate Leave/Emergency Care of Dependents

Employees have a statutory entitlement to unpaid "Time off for Dependents" under the Employment Relations Act 1999. This right allows employees unpaid time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. Additionally the University may grant paid compassionate leave.

- All employees regardless of length of service or hours of work are entitled to compassionate leave.

- All employees regardless of length of service or hours of work who have responsibility for a dependant as defined in section 4 are entitled to emergency care of dependants leave

Employees have a statutory entitlement to reasonable time off for care of dependants in the following circumstances:

- To help out, or make arrangements when a dependant falls ill, is injured or assaulted, this includes where a dependant has not been physically injured but is distressed, for example as a result of a mugging incident;
- To help out when a dependant gives birth (note the University's **Paternity Leave Agreement**)
- To cope when arrangements for caring for a dependant break down unexpectedly, for example where a nurse or carer fails to arrive as arranged or where a nursery is unexpectedly closed;
- To deal with the consequences of a death of a dependant;
- To deal with an unexpected, serious incident at school, or during school hours, for example where a child has been involved in a fight, injured at school or is being suspended from school.

Paid compassionate leave may be allowed in the following circumstances:

- 1-2 days to deal with an emergency involving a dependant or in the event of an urgent domestic/personal problem
- 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.
- 1 day upon the bereavement of a more distant relative to enable attendance at the funeral

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## 8. Working Time Policy

The Working Time Directive lays down a set of complex provisions to ensure that employees are not required to work excessive hours. Employees should not, for example, be required to work more than 48 hours per week (including overtime) averaged over a 17 week period. The regulations also specify appropriate rest breaks between shifts and appropriate annual paid leave. The University is now required to keep records of hours worked by all employees to ensure that excessive hours are not being worked.

Care needs to be taken particularly in relation to those employees who hold more than one post.

However, not all employees fall within the Working Time Directive, particularly more senior employees. At Aston, those employees who are considered to fall outside of the directive (except in the provision for annual leave) are:

- Professors
- Readers
- Senior Lecturers
- Lecturers
- Academic Related Staff in grades 4-6

Additionally, for employees involved in security and surveillance the provisions in respect of rest breaks, daily rest, weekly rest and length of night work do not apply (although all other provisions will apply). These include:

- Chief Security Officers
- Security Shift Officers
- Deputy Shift Officer
- Security Patrol Officer

For all other employees, all the provisions will apply unless they agree formally to opt out of this provision. Individual employees do have the right to waive their rights to the 48 hour limit provided that they sign a formal document to confirm this. Opt out forms may be obtained from HR.

Further advice and guidance on these regulations can be obtained by contacting your designated HR Business Partner