

# Emergency Special Leave Policy

<b>Policy Name –</b> Emergency Special Leave	
<b>Version number:</b> 2 (UUHSW49)	
<b>Policy Owner</b>	<b>Policy Author/Reviewer</b>
Geoff Gillan Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Geoff Gillan
<b>Approving body</b>	<b>Date of approval</b>
Vice Chancellor/SLT	May 2025
	<b>Equality Screened</b>
	<b>Next Review date</b>
	May 2027
Queries relating to this document should be directed to the Policy Owner – Geoff Gillan, <a href="mailto:gr.gillan@ulster.ac.uk">gr.gillan@ulster.ac.uk</a> OR <a href="mailto:healthandsafety@ulster.ac.uk">healthandsafety@ulster.ac.uk</a>	
This document can be made available on request, in alternative formats and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.	

# Contents

Policy Name – Emergency Special Leave.....	1
Contents.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Scope of this Policy.....	3
Definitions.....	4
Bereavement Leave.....	5
Compassionate and Emergency leave.....	6
Domestic Crisis Leave.....	7
Carer’s Leave.....	7
Medical and Dental Appointments.....	8
Fertility Treatment.....	9
Premature Baby Leave.....	10
Domestic Abuse.....	10
How to Apply for Emergency Special Leave.....	11
Concerns.....	11
Review.....	12

## **Introduction**

Ulster University is committed to equality of opportunity in employment for all its employees, and to promote the development of working practices and policies that support work-life balance. The University recognises that there are times in the lives of its employees when circumstances outside work may result in needing to take time off work to deal with an unexpected situation. This policy details the range of special leave options designed to help employees to balance work and personal commitments and provide support when employees are faced with difficult or unexpected circumstances away from work.

## **Scope of this Policy**

The University has a range of policies in place to support employees' health and wellbeing. In applying the Emergency Special Leave Policy, consideration should be given to the wider range of policies. Please note that the University has a Work Life Balance Policy which compliments the Emergency Special Leave Policy, and aims to help employees consider, and apply, to work flexibly and balance both work and home life.

The provisions of the Emergency Special Leave Policy apply to all categories of staff, including those on probation. This policy is effective from May 2025.

Emergency Special Leave is granted for a consecutive number of working days and should not be based on the number of hours the individual is rostered to work per day. Entitlement will be on a pro-rata basis to

normal/contractual days for those working a reduced number of days per week, and the individual will only be paid for their rostered work period.

## **Definitions**

For the purpose of this policy, dependants may be defined as:

- the employee's spouse, partner or civil partner.
- the employee's child including those for whom the employee is a guardian.
- the employee's parent including 'in-laws' and 'step-relatives'.
- a person who lives in the employee's household (excluding tenants, lodgers, boarders and employees).
- any other person who reasonably relies on the employee for assistance in the event of an accident or illness or to make arrangements for care in the event of an illness or injury.

A carer is anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The activities that carers undertake are wide ranging, including:

- Help with personal care.
- Help with mobility.
- Managing medication.
- Practical household tasks.
- Emotional support and
- Help with financial matters or administration.

## **Bereavement Leave**

In the event of a death, bereavement leave may be granted in consultation with your line manager as below:

Up to 10 days paid leave on the death of a partner, spouse, parent or child, including those children for whom the employee is a guardian.

Parents of children under the age of 18, or if a baby has been still born from 24 weeks of pregnancy, may take the above leave within the first year following their loss, either in a single block or as 2 separate blocks. Up to 3 days paid bereavement leave in the event of a miscarriage i.e., 24 weeks and under.

Up to 5 days paid bereavement leave in the event of the death of a sibling, grandparent/child, immediate In-law, and immediate 'step' family relatives.

Extended family member (aunt, uncle, cousin, nephew, niece) 1 day paid bereavement leave may be granted to attend a funeral or memorial.

It is important that managers take account of individual circumstances and exercise some flexibility and support employees as appropriate, for example, where a close relative such as a grandparent has raised the employee then, 10 days bereavement leave may be granted.

Special consideration should be given to an employee who may be able to avail of compassionate and emergency leave in the event of the death of an assistance animal, to ensure that they are appropriately supported at this time.

Aside from family members, the death of a friend, colleague or pet can be very upsetting. Annual leave or unpaid compassionate leave should be granted in these cases.

## **Compassionate and Emergency leave**

Employees may be granted time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant or someone they have caring responsibilities for.

Up to five days paid leave (in any leave year) will be considered to support the employee in these situations, plus an additional 5 days unpaid leave may be granted where applicable. The expectation is that the employee will be given time off to deal with the immediate emergency and they should actively seek alternative longer-term care arrangements as soon as possible. In considering the entitlement to Emergency Special Leave, managers should take into account the individual's responsibility where possible to resolve the immediate issues during rest days. However, if there are difficulties with this, the employee is encouraged to speak to their line manager.

Circumstances when an employee may require leave to assist a dependant or someone for whom they have caring responsibilities include:

- providing assistance when the person falls ill, gives birth, is injured or assaulted.
- making arrangements to provide care for the person who is ill or injured.
- dealing with the unexpected disruption or termination of arrangements for the care of the person; or

- dealing with an incident involving the employee's child during school hours.

## **Domestic Crisis Leave**

Domestic Crisis Leave may apply in a wide variety of unplanned and unexpected circumstances such as flood, fire or burglary. This policy is intended to allow those who experience such domestic emergencies to take a reasonable amount of time off work to deal with the situation. The policy does not apply to planned events, such as domestic repairs, refurbishment, building or trade work, installation of appliances or home deliveries.

In the event of a domestic emergency, the employee should contact their line manager, as soon as reasonably practicable, explaining the nature of the emergency and how much time off work they think they will need. Paid leave for 1 day (in any leave year) will be considered to support the employee in these situations to resolve the immediate emergency. In the event that the immediate crisis cannot be resolved within one day, it is expected that either unpaid leave, or annual leave, is used with the approval of your line manager.

## **Carer's Leave**

Employees with caring responsibilities cannot always plan for time off. The ability to take leave in an emergency, and at short notice, is important for carers, and this leave is provided for under the compassionate and emergency leave provisions in this policy. As such, it is important that contact arrangements between the employee and their line manager should be agreed in advance of any emergency.

Employees with caring responsibilities should discuss with their line manager any known leave needs relating to their caring commitments in advance where practicably possible. This will help the line manager and the other members of the team plan work and other leave arrangements.

Where possible, carers should book planned appointments for dependants at the start or end of the working day to minimise disruption to work and allow them to attend the appointment. In the case that time off during work is required, the employee should discuss with their line manager the options to accommodate this, there will an allowance of up to 1 day per year for such occasions. For any additional time, employees should consider taking annual leave, unpaid leave or making the time up.

Employees with caring responsibilities, together with their line manager, should consider whether or not adjustments such as flexible working and/or support mechanisms would help to ease the balance between work demands with caring duties. The University's Work Life Balance Policy details some options that may help give the employee better flexibility.

## **Medical and Dental Appointments**

The University supports employees who may require time off from their work to attend medical appointments (e.g. GP or hospital outpatient appointments) which will be accommodated wherever reasonably possible. Employees should try to arrange routine medical and dental appointments outside working hours if possible or towards the beginning or end of their normal working hours, requiring minimal time off. However, the University respects that this is not always feasible. Employees should inform their manager of their need to attend medical appointments as soon as reasonably possible.



Managers should be aware that requests for medical appointments are to be managed in a caring and supportive way. Employees should not use annual leave to attend medical appointments, nor are staff required to make up time lost to attend medical appointments. There may be exceptional occasions where the employee may be required to provide an appointment letter and/or other appropriate medical statement.

Time off for surgery, treatment and recuperation that relates to a medical or psychological condition and is supported by a medical certificate will be treated as sick leave.

In cases where the line manager is concerned about the frequency of medical appointments, this will be discussed with the employee, which may result in a referral being made to Occupational Health

## **Fertility Treatment**

Staff who have 26 weeks continuous service and are undergoing fertility treatment will be entitled to up to five days leave per cycle of treatment, limited to one cycle in twelve months and no more than three cycles in total. The leave is for the purpose of receiving and recovering from fertility treatment and to attend appointments specifically associated with the process. For example, consultant appointments, collection of eggs, monitoring tests etc.

Staff whose partner is undergoing fertility treatment will be entitled to up to two days of fertility treatment leave per cycle, limited to one cycle in twelve months and no more than three cycles in total. For the purposes of this leave, 'partner' refers to the partner of the member of staff

undergoing treatment, and includes same sex partners. This time off is also available to staff who have a surrogate or co-parent undergoing fertility treatment.

The University recognises that appointments and subsequent time off during fertility treatment may be required at short notice and managers are asked to be as flexible as possible.

## **Premature Baby Leave**

We recognise the medical, financial and emotional challenges that a premature birth can pose for a family. To support our employees, we are offering extended leave to parents and partners, whose baby is born prematurely (before 37 weeks) and requires neonatal care.

This extended leave entitlement is on a like for like basis, based on the number of days the baby was born before their expected due date and will be granted at full pay (pro rata for part-time employees).

Premature babies can have ongoing medical needs, requiring regular hospital appointments and check-ups. The University has a suite of family friendly policies that can support colleagues in such circumstances.

## **Domestic Abuse**

As part of the support provisions outlined in the Domestic Abuse Policy, employees will be entitled to take 10 days paid leave each leave year to deal with issues relating to domestic abuse. These issues include

matters such as but not limited to engaging with support services, finding alternative accommodation, getting legal advice and/ or pursuing legal proceedings, arranging childcare, getting welfare support and healthcare support.

## **How to apply for Emergency Special Leave**

For unexpected or emergency situations, employees should contact their line manager as soon as possible, to advise that the leave is required, to explain their situation and the time they need off work.

As detailed in this policy it is appreciated that if the employee has an emergency that they must attend to, time off will be granted to accommodate unexpected or emergency situations in line with the provisions of this policy.

The line manager will complete either a Bereavement Leave or Emergency Leave Request form and submit it to Employee Wellbeing so that the leave can be recorded.

Where an employee requires additional time to that provided for within this policy, additional unpaid or annual leave may be requested and agreed with their line manager, as appropriate.

## **Concerns**

Employees who feel that they have been treated unreasonably under any section of the Emergency Special Leave Policy can, in the first instance, raise the matter with their line manager and/or an Employee Wellbeing Advisor and/or their Trade Union representative. Ultimately, if a resolution

cannot be reached, employees have the right to raise the matter through the relevant Grievance Procedure for their staff category.

*Please note:*

The University will consider requests by employees who require additional leave in connection with particularly difficult family circumstances. Such individual circumstances should be referred to the Head of Department / School who will seek to accommodate the needs of the individual, depending on operational requirements.

The University recognises that it is not always possible to set out all potential circumstances within the policy where emergency special leave may be appropriate. For specific or exceptional circumstances not covered by this policy, please contact either Employee Wellbeing or your People Partner for advice.

## **Review**

This policy should be reviewed in conjunction with a review of the Sickness Absence Policy and Ill Health Capability Procedure in consultation with the Trade Unions. Minor revisions to clarify, update or aid with the administration of above documentation including this policy may be made by the University Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee and the JUCNC.