

**ULSTER UNIVERSITY POLICY SCREENING PRO-FORMA**  
Part 1

**Information about the policy**

**Name of the policy**

Special Leave Policy

**Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?**

Revised

**What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes)**

This policy aims to provide a framework for staff to take time off work to deal with emergencies and unforeseen situations related to their personal or domestic circumstances.

**Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?  
If so, explain how.**

All staff can apply for this Leave, however, it is expected to be of particular benefit to staff who are disabled; older age; men and women generally; and staff with dependants, as it provides an additional supportive mechanism to facilitate absence in emergency situations which do not include employee sickness absence.

**Who initiated or wrote the policy?**

The Chief People Officer initiated the review and update of the policy.

**Who owns and who implements the policy?**

The Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing owns this policy.

All staff are responsible for implementing this policy.

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**Implementation factors**

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision? (Please select one answer)

Yes

No

If yes, are they

Financial: Cost of additional provision of leave

Legislative: Changes to legislation

Other: Change to University policies

**Main stakeholders affected**

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

Staff

Students

Other service users (e.g. prospective students, conference delegates)

Other public sector organisations

Voluntary/community/trade unions

Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

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### Other policies with a bearing on this policy

Policy Name	Policy Owner
Five & 50 Strategic Plan	Vice Chancellor
People and Culture Strategy	Chief People Officer
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy	Chief People Officer
Disability Action Plan	Chief People Officer
Stress Management Procedure	Chief People Officer
Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy	Chief People Officer
Disciplinary Procedure	Chief People Officer
Grievance Procedure	Chief People Officer
Data Protection Policy	University Secretary
Sickness Absence Policy	Chief People Officer
Work-life balance Policy	Chief People Officer

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### Available evidence

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? (Please specify details for each of the Section 75 categories)

Note: evidence can come from many sources. Examples include the University's management information systems, internal or external research, surveys or consultation exercises. Anecdotal evidence such as feedback from service users may also be used.

The following evidence was considered:

- Staff Equal Opportunities (EO) monitoring data (2020)

Section 75 category	Details of evidence/information
Religious belief	The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2020, our staff profile was 50.3% Protestant, 49.7% Catholic. Compared with 6 February 2015, this indicates a 3.6% increase in Catholic staff.
Political opinion	The University does not collect information on Political Opinion, or make assumptions regarding Political Opinion based on Community Background.
Racial group	<p>The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2020, our staff profile was 94.4% White, 5.6% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME). This indicates a 1.6% increase in BME staff compared with 2015.</p> <p>Our BME profile suggests that we are three times as diverse as the local population. The Northern Ireland Census (2011) suggests that 1.8% of the NI population is BME.</p>
Age	The University's EO data were reviewed. On 6 February 2020, over one third (34.6%) of our staff were in the '46-55' age band. 26% of staff were in the '36-45' age band and 22.2% of staff were aged '56 and above'.
Marital status	The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2020, 60% of staff were 'Married or in a Civil Partnership', a marginal decrease of 1% compared to 2015 (61%).

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Sexual orientation	Although we collect staff data on sexual orientation, this is not considered to be reliable.
Men and women generally	The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2020, 56% of staff were 'Female'. This indicates a 2% increase in female staff compared with 2015.
Disability	<p>The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2020, 5.1% of staff declared a disability, an increase of 1.1% compared with 2015.</p> <p>Our disability declaration rate is lower than expected, compared with the local population. The NI Census (2011) found that 20.6% of the NI population stated that their day-to-day activities were limited because of a long-standing health problem or disability.</p>
Dependants	The University's EO data were reviewed. In 2020, 46.2% of staff had dependants. This indicates an increase of 1.5% compared with 2015.

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### Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision? (Please specify details for each of the Section 75 categories)

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious belief	None identified.
Political opinion	None identified.
Racial group	None identified.
Age	<p>Staff of all age groups will potentially avail of this policy. However, as employees get older, UK-wide statistics and CIPD reports suggest that the 'burden' of caring not only for children but also for older relatives and dependents increases.</p> <p>With an aging population and an aging workforce, it is evident that some staff may increasingly require time off to deal with emergency caring responsibilities. This policy is designed to provide a framework through which this requirement can be managed.</p> <p>Source: Office for National Statistics <a href="http://www.ons.gov.uk">www.ons.gov.uk</a></p>
Marital status	None identified.
Sexual orientation	None identified.
Men and women generally	<p>The policy will apply to all staff irrespective of gender. There is the potential that those female staff members may avail more of the provisions than their male counterparts, as evidence suggests that females are taking on more caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Source: <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-55016842">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-55016842</a></p> <p>Research was conducted at the University's Women's Network on attitudes and experience in relation to time off to deal with</p>

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	<p>family emergencies. Qualitative data found that requests for time off to deal with emergency domestic or caring responsibilities are often treated with negativity by line managers and colleagues.</p> <p>Similar findings were generated at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HWS) 'Campus Conversations', when it was revealed that there is inconsistency in the way that such requests are handled, as there is no clear framework to guide managers in their response to such situations. There is also evidence that some staff have called in sick when, in reality, they needed time off to deal with a family or domestic emergency.</p> <p>In terms of bereavement leave, staff who are grieving and might also have the burden of organising family funerals and other related administrative matters find themselves having to report that they are sick to account for time away from work for more than three days. Feedback from all levels of staff find the current timeframe unreasonable and resent having to take time off masked as sickness absence when they are dealing with a bereavement.</p> <p>This policy will provide provision for reasonable time off to deal with unexpected personal and caring responsibilities such as in cases of bereavement or the diagnosis of serious illness or injury of a dependent or next of kin. It will have a positive impact on both men and women generally in achieving an improved work-life balance.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>In circumstances where an employee is responsible for caring for a dependant who has a disability, there is a need for a framework which will enable that member of staff to deal with an unforeseen, emergency situation.</p> <p>Qualitative data suggests that some employees need to take time off work to deal with emergencies related to a disabled family member or dependent (Campus Conversations, as above).</p> <p>This policy will provide provision for reasonable time off to deal with unexpected, emergency situations. This ensures that staff and those who they care for are not indirectly disadvantaged by the University's attendance policies and procedures.</p>
<p>Dependants</p>	<p>Qualitative data collected from a Women's Network focus group reveal that requests for time off to deal with emergency domestic or caring responsibilities are often treated with negativity by line managers and colleagues. Similar findings were generated at the HSW 'Campus Conversations' when it was revealed that</p>

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	<p>there is inconsistency in the way that such requests are handled as there is no clear framework to guide managers in their response to such situations. There is also evidence that some staff have called in sick when, in reality they needed time off to deal with a family or domestic emergency.</p> <p>In circumstances where an employee is responsible for caring for a dependent who has a disability, there is a need for a framework which will enable that member of staff to deal with an unforeseen, emergency situation.</p> <p>This policy will include provisions for time off for people with dependants and provides guidance for those need to take time off work in emergency situations to care for dependants.</p>
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### Consultation

Consultation with relevant groups, organisations or individuals about the policy can provide useful information about issues/opportunities which are specifically related to them (i.e. evidence to inform the policy). Please indicate whether you carried out (or intend to carry out) any consultation exercises prior to equality screening?

The following groups were consulted during the development of this policy:

- Trade Unions;
- Individual meetings with staff who have experienced the requirement to take time off for unforeseen emergencies and line managers who have had to deal with such requests;
- Ulster University Women's Network
- People and Culture Senior Management Team
- Athena SWAN focus group
- The Statutory Health & Safety Committee, which includes the recognised Trade Unions;
- The University's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee which includes the recognised Trade Unions; and
- The Senior Leadership Team.



## Screening

### Introduction

The answers to the following screening questions will assist the University in making a decision whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment on the policy. The following information is provided to help you to identify and comment on the level of likely impact of the policy in questions 1-4:

#### Select 'major' impact if:

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there are insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

#### Select 'minor' impact if:

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations;
- e) Differential impact observed and opportunities exist to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

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### **Select 'none' if:**

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

**Taking into account the evidence presented in Part 1, please complete the screening questions (Questions 1-4).**

Part 2

**Screening questions**

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (Please provide details)		
Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? (minor/major/none)
Religious belief	This policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group. There is no data that has been considered or identified that would demonstrate differential impact based on an individual's religious belief.	None
Political opinion	This policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group. There is no data that has been considered or identified that would demonstrate differential impact based on an individual's political opinion.	None
Racial group	This policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group. There is no data that has been considered or identified that would demonstrate differential impact based on an individual's racial group.	None
Age	This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group given that with increased age comes the potential for caring for dependants. This policy provides a supportive mechanism to facilitate absence in emergency situations which do not include employee sickness absence.	Minor (+)
Marital status	This policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group. There is no data that has been considered or identified that would demonstrate differential impact based on an individual's marital status.	None
Sexual orientation	This policy is unlikely to impact on equality of opportunity for this group.	None

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	There is no data that has been considered or identified that would demonstrate differential impact based on an individual's sexual orientation.	
Men and women generally	This policy is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this group. The policy applies to all staff with the potential that female staff may avail of the provisions more than their male counterparts, given the higher tendency for female staff to undertake caring responsibilities. This policy provides a supportive mechanism to facilitate absence in emergency situations which do not include employee sickness absence.	Minor (+)
Disability	This policy is for all staff, however, it is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category. Those staff who have dependants with disabilities or have a disability themselves may potentially avail of the Special Leave arrangements more than other staff. The policy provides a supportive mechanism to facilitate absence in emergency situations which do not include employee sickness absence.	Minor (+)
Dependants	The policy is for all staff, however, it is likely to have a positive impact on equality of opportunity for this category. Those staff with dependents may potentially avail of the Special Leave arrangements more than staff who do not have these responsibilities. This policy provides a supportive mechanism to facilitate absence in emergency situations which do not include employee sickness absence.	Minor (+)

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2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?		
Section 75 category	If <b>Yes</b> , provide details	If <b>No</b> , provide reasons
Religious belief		No, this policy applies to all staff irrespective of their section 75 category.
Political opinion		No, this policy applies to all staff irrespective of their section 75 category.
Racial group		No, this policy applies to all staff irrespective of their section 75 category.
Age		No, this policy applies to all staff irrespective of their section 75 category.
Marital status		No, this policy applies to all staff irrespective of their section 75 category.
Sexual orientation		No, this policy applies to all staff irrespective of their section 75 category.
Men and women generally		No, this policy applies to all staff irrespective of their section 75 category.
Disability		No, this policy applies to all staff irrespective of their section 75 category.
Dependants		No, this policy applies to all staff irrespective of their section 75 category.

Part 2

3 To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (Please provide details)		
Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact (minor/major/none)
Religious belief	This policy is unlikely to impact on good relations for this category. The policy has no relevance to good relations.	None
Political opinion	This policy is unlikely to impact on good relations for this category. The policy has no relevance to good relations.	None
Racial group	This policy is unlikely to impact on good relations for this category. The policy has no relevance to good relations.	None

4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?		
Good relations category	If <b>Yes</b> , provide details	If <b>No</b> , provide reasons
Religious belief		The policy has no relevance to good relations.
Political opinion		The policy has no relevance to good relations.
Racial group		The policy has no relevance to good relations.

**Additional considerations**

**Multiple identity**

<p><b>5</b> Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, please provide details of any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities? (<i>For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people</i>). Please include details of any data which you have used to determine/identify this impact</p>	
<p>Section 75 categories (please specify)</p>	<p>Details of policy impact and details of data which describes the policy impact</p>
<p>Age, men and women generally, disability and dependents.</p>	<p>The policy provides a framework for Special Leave, which is likely to have a positive impact across multiple Section 75 categories.</p>

**Disability Duties**

<p><b>6.</b> Does the policy provide an opportunity to encourage disabled people to participate in University life?</p>	
<p>If <b>Yes</b>, provide details</p>	<p>If <b>No</b>, provide reasons</p>
	<p>The policy applies to all staff irrespective of section 75 category / background. Although those with disabilities may avail of the provisions of the policy potentially more than staff who do not have a disability, the policy does not provide opportunities to encourage disabled people to participate more in university life.</p>

Part 2

<b>7. Does the policy provide an opportunity to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?</b>	
<b>If Yes, provide details</b>	<b>If No, provide reasons</b>
	No – the policy is aimed at all staff in the University and as such applies irrespective of disability. Approval of applications made will be applied equally to all staff



## Screening decision

Based on the evidence considered and outlined in Part 1 and the responses to the screening questions (Part 2), please indicate the screening decision for this policy:

Note: The University should take particular care not to screen out policies that have a procurement aspect if there is potential to promote equality of opportunity through the procurement of services.

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**Screen in** the policy (subject the policy to an Equality Impact Assessment)  
*i.e. the likely impact is 'major' in respect of one, or more of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories*

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**Screen out** the policy without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted (no Equality Impact Assessment)  
*i.e. the likely impact is 'none' in respect of all of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories*

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**Screen out** the policy and **mitigate the impacts on equality** by **amending or changing the policy**, or by **developing an alternative policy or action** (no Equality Impact Assessment)  
*i.e. the likely impact is 'minor' in respect of one, or more of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories*

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### Part 3

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment (i.e. 'screen in' the policy), please provide details of the reasons.

N/A

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (i.e. 'screen out' the policy), please provide details of the reasons.

N/A

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment (i.e. 'screen out' the policy) and mitigate the impacts on equality by amending or changing the policy, or by developing an alternative policy or action, please provide reasons to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy:

The decision is to screen out the Procedure as the likely impact is 'minor' in respect of the following characteristics:

- Age
- Gender
- Disability
- Dependants

However, this impact is likely to be positive.

This policy aims to provide a framework designed to provide the opportunity for staff to take time off work to deal with emergencies and unforeseen situations related to the personal or domestic circumstances.

The changes to this policy will be reviewed one year after it has been implemented and if necessary amended. Thereafter the policy will be reviewed in line with University policy, every two years.

## Timetabling and prioritising

If the policy has been '**screened in**' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	
Social need	
Effect on people's daily lives	
Relevance to the University's functions	

Note: The Total Rating Score will be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the University in timetabling. Details of the University's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable will be included in its quarterly Screening Reports.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

Yes

No



If yes, please provide details:

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## Approval and authorisation

	Position/Job Title	Date
<b>Screened by:</b> 	Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing	03/06/2020
<b>Approved by:</b> 	Chief People Officer	29/06/21

Note: Following approval by the Senior Leadership Team/Senate, the policy owner must inform the University Secretary that the policy has been approved. Once the Council of the University has been informed of the policy (either directly or through an appropriate Committee), the policy owner can then promulgate the policy and develop appropriate training or awareness raising material in relation to the policy.

A copy of the screening pro-forma will be made available on the University's website and be made available on request.

## Review

Note: Policies must be reviewed at least every two years, but sooner if changes in legislation or other variables require review.

This policy is due for review (in terms of its impact on equality of opportunity and good relations) by the policy owner on:

29/06/23