

Special Leave Policies:

Time Off for Dependants

Care Leave

Adverse Weather and Travel Disruptions

Public Duties

Volunteer Reserve Forces

Jury Service

Religious Observance

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Introduction

UECS understands that there may be times when employees need time off from work for reasons that do not fall under the normal leave provisions. These special leave policies provide information to staff about statutory and occupational entitlements and eligibility.

All leave will need to be given within existing budgets and resources. There is also a requirement to record all special leave through HR Organiser and People Manager to ensure UECS has a record of the impact of these provisions.

Employees can appeal to the next level of management if they are unhappy with a decision.

You can find out about other types of leave, including unpaid parental leave, by referring to the [UECS Family Leave Policies](#).

Section 1: Time Off for Dependants

1.1 About time off for dependants

Time off for dependants allows you the right to take a reasonable amount of time off work to deal with certain unexpected or sudden emergencies and to make any necessary longer-term arrangements.

A dependant is your partner, child or parent, or someone who lives with you as part of your family.

For example, this could be a grandparent who lives in your household. It does not include tenants or boarders living in your family home, or someone who lives in your household as an employee, such as a live-in housekeeper.

In cases of illness, injury or where care arrangements break down, a dependant may also be someone who reasonably relies on you for assistance.

This may be where you are the primary carer or the only person who can help in an emergency. For example, a parent or grandparent who lives elsewhere but who relies on you for assistance when problems arise.

Under what circumstances can you take time-off?

The right allows you to deal with an unexpected or sudden problem and make any necessary longer-term arrangements, for example:

- if a dependant falls ill or has been involved in an accident or assaulted, including where the victim is hurt or distressed rather than injured physically
- to make longer-term care arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured
- to deal with the death of a dependant; for example, to make funeral arrangements or to attend a funeral (also refer to the [UECS Bereavement Policy](#))
- to deal with an unexpected disruption or breakdown in care arrangements for a dependant; for example, when the childminder or nurse fails to turn up
- to deal with an incident involving your child during school hours; for example, if the child has been involved in a fight or is being suspended from school

How much time off is allowed?

There is not a set limit to the amount of time off which can be taken. In most cases, the amount of leave will be one or two days at the most, but this will depend on your individual circumstance, although you may be able to take a longer period of leave under other arrangements.

For example, if your child falls ill, the leave should be enough to help you cope with the crisis - to deal with the immediate care of your child, visiting the doctor if necessary, and to make longer term care arrangements. It does not mean that you may take two weeks leave to look after your sick child.

Payment

The right for this leave does not include a statutory right to pay. However, there may be some circumstances when you will be entitled to paid leave to deal with sudden or unexpected family / dependant problems.

You may be able to take leave under the provisions of the UECS [Family Leave Policies](#) or [Bereavement Policy](#).

Notification

If you need time off to care for a dependant you should inform your manager as soon as possible. You should give details of your absence, the reason for it and how long you expect to be absent from work.

It is acknowledged that there may be a rare occasion when you are unable to contact your manager or another appropriate person. In such circumstances you should, at the earliest opportunity, inform your manager of the reason for your absence from work.

Your manager may wish to discuss your absence with you upon your return to work.

What about my pension contributions?

To ensure your pension entitlement is not affected, UECS will automatically take pension contributions from you for short periods of unpaid leave.

What happens if I need longer time off, or know in advance that the problem is going to arise?

This leave is intended to cover unforeseen matters.

If you know in advance that you are going to need time off, it may be possible to arrange a longer period of unpaid leave or a combination of unpaid leave and annual leave.

If the reason you need leave relates to your child, you may be entitled to take unpaid parental leave.

Section 2: Care Leave

2.1 About care leave

If you look after somebody with a long-term care need outside of the workplace, and are not paid for this care, care leave enables you to take unpaid time off work to look after them, for example a person who:

- has issues relating to old age
- has a long-term illness or injury
- has a terminal illness

This person could be your partner, child or parent, or someone who lives with you as part of your family. For example, this could be an elderly aunt or grandparent who lives in your household.

This does not include tenants or boarders living in your family home, or someone who lives in your household as an employee, for example, a live-in housekeeper.

You will remain employed while on care leave. At the end of the period of unpaid care leave you will be entitled to return to the same job as before.

How much time off is allowed?

You can take up to one week (five working days) of leave per year (based on 38 hours per week, pro-rata for those who work a differing number of hours). The leave can be taken flexibly, either in individual or half-days, up to a block of one week

Payment

The right for this leave does not include a statutory right to pay.

Notification to take unpaid care leave

You must give 21 days' notice before the intended start date. You should give written notification of your intention to take unpaid care leave, the date on which you intend this leave to start and the duration of the leave and send it to your manager and [People & Culture](#).

Unpaid care leave will be subject to agreement with UECS on the timing and duration of the leave. Such agreement will not be unnecessarily withheld but will take into account service provision.

What about my pension contributions?

To ensure your pension entitlement is not affected, UECS will automatically take pension contributions from you for short periods of unpaid leave.

Section 3: Adverse Weather and Travel Disruptions

3.1 Arrangements during adverse weather and travel disruptions

A degree of flexibility will be required from all staff during adverse weather conditions and travel disruptions.

Unless specifically broadcast to the contrary, the University will stay open wherever possible to ensure a normal level of service is maintained, particularly as there is a significant body of students who live on campus.

Staff will be informed by the Registrar and Secretary, or their nominee, of any decision to reduce services, or to send staff home early.

You are expected to make every reasonable effort to get to work. If you are unable to attend your normal place of work or are likely to be significantly delayed, you should speak directly with your manager if possible (or in their absence, another senior member of staff).

You should agree with your manager how to treat the absence for payment purposes.

The following options can be considered:

- A day's paid annual leave
- A day's unpaid leave
- A paid day with the agreement to make up the lost hours on a later date
- If you are able to, and your manager agrees, you may work from home

Section 4: Public Duties

4.1 About unpaid public duty leave

If you undertake certain public duties, you can request reasonable unpaid time off work for the purpose of carrying them out. Such duties include:

- a magistrate (also known as a justice of the peace)
- a local councillor
- a school governor
- a member of any statutory tribunal (for example an employment tribunal)
- a member of the managing or governing body of an educational establishment
- a member of a health authority

The amount of time off is to be agreed between you and your manager based on:

- how long the duties might take
- the amount of time the employee has already had off for public duties
- how the time off will affect the business

Any unpaid leave for your public duties may be taken in days or half-days, for each absence from work. Your manager can refuse a request for time off if they think it's unreasonable.

No travelling or subsistence allowance will be paid by UECS for your public duties.

Notification to take unpaid public duty leave

You must give 21 days' notice before the intended start date. You should give written notification of your intention to take unpaid public duty leave, the date on which you intend this leave to start and the duration of the leave and send it to your manager and [People & Culture](#).

What about my pension contributions?

To ensure your pension entitlement is not affected, UECS will automatically take pension contributions from you for short periods of unpaid leave.

For longer periods, you will be given the opportunity to make voluntary contributions to maintain your pensionable service. If you choose not to make voluntary contributions, then your pensionable service will be reduced by the amount of time you take unpaid leave.

Section 5: Volunteer Reserve Forces

5.1 About volunteer reserve forces

The University of Essex is pledged to honour the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) and support the Armed Forces Community. UECS, as a subsidiary company of the University of Essex, also honours the [Armed Forces Covenant](#).

As a member of the reserve armed forces (reservists), you and UECS have certain rights and responsibilities when you:

- join up or start a new job
- are called up for service (mobilised)
- return to work

These rights and responsibilities can be seen in full on the Direct.Gov website here [Rights and responsibilities for reservists and employers : Introduction - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Time off for training

Training for reservists is usually made up of:

- one evening a week
- several weekends throughout the year
- a 15-day training course each year

UECS will allow unpaid time off for training.

If you are called up

In most cases you will get 28 days' notice when you are called up (mobilised). You should let your manager know as soon as possible.

Both you and UECS can apply to delay or cancel mobilisation:

- you can apply to cancel your mobilisation if you are called up at a difficult time (for example, you are caring for someone or you're in full-time education)
- UECS can apply to cancel your mobilisation if it would seriously harm the services we provide (for example, by causing financial harm or making it difficult to provide services)

You can apply to:

- defer mobilisation for up to a year – you will get a new date to report for duty
- get an exemption for a year or more - you will not be called out again until it expires
- cancel (revoke) mobilisation if you've already been mobilised

Reservists and employers must apply within 7 days of you getting the call-out notice.

Returning to work

After service, reservists are given a period of leave. If you want to return to work before the end of your leave you must get permission from either your commanding officer or the demobilisation centre.

You should write to your Head of Service and [People & Culture](#) as soon as you know when you can return to work. We will write to you to confirm the date you can return to work.

You are entitled to return to the same type of job you were doing before you were mobilised, on the same terms and conditions.

If the job no longer exists, you are entitled to a reasonable alternative.

Information about the rights and responsibilities of both you and UECS can be seen in full on the Direct.Gov website here [Rights and responsibilities for reservists and employers : Introduction - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Section 6: Jury Service, Court and Tribunal Attendance

6.1 About jury service, court and tribunal attendance

If you are called for jury service or as a witness in a court or tribunal case, you should inform your manager immediately and provide confirmation of your attendance.

If the attendance is during a pre-arranged holiday, you may attend and take annual leave at a later date provided that you provide confirmation of your attendance.

If you are not required to attend court every day, or for only half of a day, you must return to work wherever practicable.

You are able to claim “loss of earnings” from Her Majesty’s Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to cover your salary or part of your salary while you are on jury service. UECS will pay the difference between this compensation and your normal average earnings.

Before your jury service begins, you and [People & Culture](#) should complete [Form 5223D](#). You will need to hand the completed form to the Court on your first day of jury service.

You must immediately notify [People & Culture](#) of all loss of earnings compensation received from HMCTS. Failure to do so will be considered a disciplinary matter and will be progressed in line with the [UECS Disciplinary Procedure](#).

Section 7: Religious Observance

7.1 Arrangements for religious observance

UECS recognises the importance that faith, belief and spirituality play in the lives of employees and we try to accommodate requests whenever possible in line with the University's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).

You should approach your line manager to request a change in your working arrangements to carry out acts of religious observance such as prayer. If you require a permanent change to the number of hours worked or your working pattern, you will need to complete a flexible working form.

If you wish to take part in a religious festival, day of observance or pilgrimage, you should request annual leave. As with all requests for time off, you should give as much notice as possible, ideally at the beginning of the leave year, although it is noted that the dates may change from year to year and the exact date may not be known until nearer the time. If you have insufficient annual leave remaining, you could request unpaid leave, for all or part of the period.

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