

## **SEVERE/ADVERSE WEATHER GUIDANCE FOR STAFF**

### **Introduction**

There will be occasions where severe or adverse weather creates difficulties in attending the workplace on time or at all. There are so many potential situations resulting from severe weather, all of which will have a different impact, that detailed and concise guidelines on how to manage every eventuality are not possible.

This policy is intended to provide advice and guidance of a general nature to assist Heads in preparing for such situations, and to all staff to outline potential scenarios and options in the event of difficulty in attending work. It reflects general advice given when queries are received and inevitably will not cover all circumstances in every case.

### **Key Principles**

This policy is based on the recognition and appreciation that staff always make every reasonable effort to attend work and that non-attendance is for a genuine reason.

It is a key principle that the University does not expect any member of staff to put themselves at risk, either at work, or in travelling to work.

On that basis, the University will be deemed to be open unless a specific announcement is made on the HWU Website, local radio (e.g. Radio Forth, Radio Borders, BBC Radio Scotland or Real Radio) or, if it is to close early, via a message from the University Secretary.

If a member of staff is unable to attend work or expect to be delayed, they should report the absence/delay in line with the locally agreed reporting procedures for normal absence, and as early as possible, ideally before their scheduled start time.

### **General Guidelines**

#### **Travelling to and from work**

In line with the key principles outlined above, whilst no-one is expected to put themselves at risk, all possible travel to work methods should be considered. For example, if public transport is still operating, then it should be considered, even if the journey to work may take slightly longer than usual.

It would also be appropriate (health, mobility and safety of roads and paths permitting) to walk a reasonable distance either to work or to the nearest public transport. As a guide, a distance of up to two miles each way would be reasonable, although individual levels of fitness and mobility and prevailing weather conditions could alter this.

### Alternative methods of working

If a member of staff is unable to attend their normal place of work, it may be appropriate to work at another location or campus in the short-term (provided that effective work can be carried out at a different location).

Alternatively, some staff may be able to work at home for a short time. Provided that taking work home does not breach any security or confidentiality procedures, staff might wish to prepare for the possibility of being unable to attend work for a short period by downloading or taking specific work home to work on. In these circumstances, staff should discuss this with their line manager so that s/he is aware of and approves the work being taken off-site.

### Time off and Pay

If an individual is able to attend work but arrives late, or if the University declares a closure (whether for a full day or an early closure), s/he will receive full pay.

Where the adverse weather or the absence as a result of adverse weather is of a short-term nature (e.g. for a day or so), it would not be appropriate to withhold pay or to require the individual to take leave to cover the days.

Where the adverse weather is likely to continue beyond the short-term or the impact of the weather on, e.g. roads and transport, continue, Heads should consider an appropriate solution depending on the circumstances. This may include continued working from home; or paid time off to be made up at a later date (over a reasonable period of time); or taking annual leave to cover the absence; or taking unpaid leave to cover the absence (or a combination of options).

There are no hard and fast rules about which option is most appropriate, but Heads are advised to consider each situation on its merits and to apply fair and consistent treatment across all staff groups as far as possible.

### Time off for family reasons

There may be circumstances where the individual's ability to travel or attend work is not affected by the adverse weather conditions themselves, but because of a need to provide emergency care for family and/or other dependants (for example, schools or nursery closures). In such circumstances, the provisions of the Emergency Dependents Leave Policy would apply.

### Disability or Medical Conditions

Where a member of staff has a particular medical condition or disability that might have a greater impact in severe weather conditions, Heads and managers should consider whether any reasonable adjustments may be made to support them. Advice and guidance on specific cases is also available from HR and (via HR) the Occupational Health Centre.

### **Implementing the Guidelines**

As a general rule, it is helpful for Heads to ensure that their staff are clear on how these guidelines will be implemented; for example in ensuring all staff are clear on the reporting of delayed arrival or non-attendance; and on which types of work are more suitable to working at home should the occasion arise.

Heads are expected to use their discretion and judgement in deciding the most appropriate action to take. This may differ according to the type of work the individual staff member carries out; the implications of non-attendance on, e.g. the student experience; the health and safety implications for individual members of staff. It might be acceptable, for example, to allow certain members of staff to leave early if weather conditions are deteriorating in certain areas or travel information indicates difficulties on certain routes.

Where Heads or managers have specific queries, the HR Advisers will provide additional support and advice. However, they will not be able to give precise and specific advice for every given situation and it should be recognised that in some circumstances, individuals may be treated differently and a blanket policy applied indiscriminately may not always be appropriate.