

## **ADVERSE CONDITIONS POLICY**

**September 2010**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The University operates 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. It is multi-site, covering a wide geographical area, and the conditions that prevail on one site may not apply on another; it would be rare to have a complete closure of the University.
- 1.2 This policy covers adverse weather conditions, and other conditions affecting travel to and from work including transport industrial action. A degree of flexibility will be required during adverse weather or access problems. Unless specifically broadcasted to the contrary, the University will remain open for all staff and students.
- 1.3 There will be occasions, after assessment of the risks, when partial or complete closure needs to be considered. This procedure provides guidance on the practices to be followed in the event of adverse conditions (such as severe weather) when University operations are affected, and when it is deemed that a site or sites should be closed for teaching and/or working.
- 1.4 The University has a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work. This procedure recognises the University's need to maintain the safety and security of its sites, staff and students at all times.
- 1.5 Employees are under a general duty to take reasonable care of their own physical and mental health and safety, and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.
- 1.6 For the purpose of this procedure, the term 'closed' refers to a full closure of a campus or site. In this event, a site will be closed to both staff and students with neither teaching taking place nor staff being required to attend for work\*.
- 1.7 'Partial closure' refers to occasions when teaching may be suspended at a site, but the site itself remains open for staff to attend for work.
- 1.8 The decision to suspend teaching or close a site entirely will be made by a member of the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group.
- 1.9 The University expects to remain open during adverse conditions and operate as normal a service as possible. The table at Appendix 1 gives an indication of the types of weather condition and the severity that could potentially lead to a closure of a site(s).
- 1.10 This procedure aims to ensure there is effective communication in such circumstances, and that staff are treated fairly and consistently.

\*unless otherwise advised (see 3.4)

## **2 PROCEDURE – SITE REMAINS OPEN**

- 2.1 Where a site is open, staff have a responsibility to attend for work according to the terms of their contract. Bad weather can be localised and this may result in difficult conditions prevailing in the employee's home area, which make travel to work dangerous or impossible. Employees are expected to make every effort to attend for work, including considering other means of transport even if this may take longer, for example walking, train or bus, even if they would normally drive.
- 2.2 The University recognises that staff may travel to work from a wide geographical area, and the University cannot be expected to meet any loss of time arising from this. Individuals must make a personal decision as to whether it is safe or not for them to travel, or whether it might be appropriate for them to travel later in the day when it is safer to do so.
- 2.3 In the event of an employee being unable to attend for work in such circumstances, s/he will be expected to apply for annual leave, utilise flexi leave or take unpaid leave unless it is possible to arrange for work to be done at home or at another time. Staff that are unable to attend for work in such circumstances should follow the University's absence reporting procedure. Absence that has not been reported will be regarded as unauthorised (unless there are extenuating circumstances) and as such pay may be withheld.
- 2.4 When conditions are poor but not adverse enough to require the closure of a site, managers are asked to sympathetically consider requests from staff to leave early e.g. because they have a long journey or have to collect children from a school that has been closed. In such cases, the time should be made up or consideration given to an appropriate method of leave (for example, annual leave, time off in lieu or carer's leave). In the event of school closures or other disruption to child care arrangements, staff should note that it is not possible to bring children on to a University site.
- 2.5 Priority consideration should be given to disabled staff, pregnant women and those with caring responsibilities in respect of requests to work from home or to leave early. In cases where disabled staff are unable to travel to work or use alternative transport modes as a result of their impairment, even though the site remains open, then it could be considered a reasonable adjustment that they are not withheld pay for that time. For example, disabled staff may find it more difficult navigating icy footpaths leading into one of the campuses. Line managers should ensure they discuss the specific circumstances with staff to which this applies.
- 2.6 In the event of adverse weather conditions, the University reserves the right to reasonably re-allocate staff who work outside or have driving duties to other tasks temporarily, in line with the grade of their post and the training that they have been provided.

- 2.7 Where a site is open but weather conditions show signs of worsening, the University will obtain detailed reports on road and other conditions before making a decision of whether to allow staff to leave early.

### **3 PROCEDURE – SITE IS CLOSED**

- 3.1 If a situation occurs where travel to work or the continuation of work at a site becomes dangerous or impossible, the decision may be taken to close a site or sites. In this case all staff will be made aware of the decision.
- 3.2 If informed during working hours that a site will close, staff should leave as quickly as possible but ensure that all usual security routines are followed. Staff should take extra care when leaving the site and travelling home in adverse weather conditions. Extra consideration should be given to colleagues with mobility problems, particularly if they are unable to travel by their usual means and require assistance to get home.
- 3.3 In the event of the decision being taken to close a site outside normal office hours, staff should not attend for work. There is no requirement to telephone to communicate their absence.
- 3.4 In the event of a site being closed, the University may identify staff working within Facilities who could be deemed to be 'essential' in order to maintain the safety and security of the site and provide essential services. A member of the Facilities Senior Management Team, as directed by the Director of Facilities, will co-ordinate communication to all staff within Facilities to confirm who would be deemed 'essential' given the particular circumstances of a site closure, and to establish who could safely attend the site.
- 3.5 Individuals deemed to be 'essential' should make every effort to attend their usual place of work at their normal working time, even though the University is closed to all other staff. Individuals must make a personal decision as to whether it is safe or not for them to travel. Should they be prevented from attending they must notify the University as soon as is reasonably practicable, by telephoning 0117 32 82552.
- 3.6 A degree of flexibility will be required of individuals in 'essential' roles, who may be requested to work extended and/or amended hours or at an alternative location, in order to ensure continued cover of their service. Staff should keep a log of their working times and ensure they take adequate rest breaks.
- 3.7 If conditions worsen in an employee's home area and/or they need to leave early they should discuss their specific circumstances with an appropriate member of the Facilities management team. If conditions render it impossible for the employee to travel home then support will be provided, appropriate to the particular circumstances, to ensure their safety and welfare.

- 3.8 There may be some circumstances where it is deemed necessary for all staff to leave the site/s or for all staff to remain on the site/s. In such cases the University's Major Incident procedures would be brought into effect. Staff should follow specific instructions provided at the time.
- 3.9 Should a site be closed or teaching suspended on any given day, staff should assume that it will be open as usual on the following day unless otherwise communicated.

#### **4 COMMUNICATION**

- 4.1 The University will endeavour to communicate access problems to any of its sites at the earliest opportunity. Where the University becomes party to information that is relevant to how people make their journey home, it will share that in a timely manner via the internet / e-mail.
- 4.2 In the event of a major emergency or exceptional weather conditions occurring during normal working hours which requires a site to close, staff will be advised by a senior manager and through e-mail. Information will also be posted on the internet at <http://www.uwe.ac.uk> using a 'news flash.'
- 4.3 If a major emergency occurs or there is exceptionally bad weather outside normal working hours, then information about site closures will be set out on the internet at <http://www.uwe.ac.uk>, usually by 6.30am. Staff due to start work prior to this time should make arrangements with their local line manager.
- 4.4 Staff unable to access the internet should listen to local radio, where information regarding site closures will be broadcast.
- 4.5 Radio Frequencies:
- |           |                |         |
|-----------|----------------|---------|
| BBC Radio | FM 94.9, 104.6 | MW 1548 |
| Heart     | FM 96.3, 103   |         |
| Kiss      | FM 97.2, 101   |         |
| Star      | FM 107.2       |         |
| Jack      | FM 106.5       |         |
- 4.6 Staff unable to access the internet or local radio stations should telephone Bristol 0117 9656261 for instructions. Staff are asked not to telephone the University unnecessarily to make enquiries.
- 4.7 There may be occasions when an emergency is local to the University e.g. flooding, power cut, and staff at home may be unaware of a need to check the above sources of information. In such circumstances Deans / Heads of Service will make arrangements to notify staff at home.

- 4.8 Staff based at Hartpury, the Swindon and Bath Hospital sites and other Bristol sites (for example Emerald Park, Spike Island, Bush House) should follow local decisions regarding closure and ensure that their line manager is apprised of their situation.
- 4.9 In accordance with procedures for dealing with academic staff absence, Deans are expected to make appropriate local arrangements in the event that a member of academic staff is unable to attend work, even though the site remains open.

## **5 LATENESS OR ABSENCE**

- 5.1 In the event of arriving at work late as a result of delays in public transport or poor road conditions, staff should keep their line manager apprised of their situation. Staff would be expected to make up time lost or apply for an appropriate form of leave. It could be considered a reasonable adjustment for disabled staff to be allowed flexibility in their working hours in such circumstances, with no reduction in their pay or annual leave entitlement. Line managers should ensure they discuss the specific circumstances with staff to which this applies.
- 5.2 If an employee fails to attend work due to adverse weather conditions without any notification, and the site has remained open for working, the University reserves the right to treat the absence in the same way as any other unauthorised absence (refer to the University's procedure for dealing with matters of Conduct).

## **6 PAYMENT IN THE EVENT OF SITE CLOSURE**

- 6.1 If the University declares closure of a site or sites, pay will not be withheld from staff that were scheduled to attend for work at those sites.
- 6.2 Staff that are deemed to be in 'essential' roles (see 3.4) will also be entitled to receive time off in lieu for any hours worked. Overtime or additional payments should not be expected if this would have been a normal working day.
- 6.3 If staff make a decision to work at home in the event of a site closure, they will not be entitled to additional payment or time off in lieu.
- 6.4 Staff that are on leave (annual, maternity, sickness etc.) will not be entitled to additional payment or time off in lieu in the event of a site closure.

## **7      RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The following policies may be of some relevance to this document:

Health and Safety Policy  
Absence Reporting Procedure  
Procedure for dealing with matters of Conduct  
Carer's Leave  
IT Security Policy

**September 2010**  
(revised Mar 2011)

## Appendix 1

The following table gives an indication of the types of condition and the severity that would potentially lead to a closure of a site/s.

**This list is not definitive, and only acts as guidance for those making such decisions.**

| Conditions               | Characteristics   | Severity   |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| High winds               | Gale force 8 and above.<br>Potential structural damage.<br>Fallen trees.<br>Flying debris.<br>Vehicles overturned.                                      | Evidence of flying hazards.<br>Risk of injury to people in the open.<br>Posts and signs uprooted.<br>Driving is difficult.<br>Gusts exceeding 60mph. |
| Heavy Snow               | Accumulations on roads not cleared by salt.<br>Visibility reduced.<br>Blizzard rates of fall with wind.<br>Severe wind chill.<br>Freezing temperatures. | Accumulations above 5cm.<br>Risk of freeze over at dusk.<br>Attempts to clear paths not effective.<br>Accidents occurring on site.                   |
| Ice                      | Sub zero temperatures.<br>Black Ice.<br>Unable to control vehicles.<br>Unable to walk safely.<br>Salt ineffective.                                      | Temperatures below - 8C.<br>Salt less effective below -12C.<br>Diesel solidifies in filters at -9C.<br>Heating systems failing.<br>Offices below 16C |
| Freezing Rain            | Rain turns instantly to ice.<br>Walking is very dangerous.<br>Driving is very dangerous.<br>It appears as black ice everywhere.                         | Risk of freeze over at dusk.<br>Attempts to clear paths etc not effective.<br>Accidents occurring on site.   |
| Severe Electrical Storms | Local flooding.<br>Power failures.<br>Lighting strikes.<br>Strong winds.<br>Large hail stones.<br>People at risk in the open.                           | Damage to buildings.<br>Lighting strikes to people in the open.<br>Flooding, overflowing drains.<br>Risk of explosion.                               |
| Flooding                 | Torrential rain.<br>Fast flowing water.<br>Land slides/mud slides.<br>Basements filling up.<br>Electrical installations exposed.                        | Water entering buildings.<br>Water above floor level inside.<br>External floods over 6 inches  |