

Bereavement & Compassionate Leave Policy

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1. Introduction

Unfortunately, there are times in life when we are thrown significant and unexpected challenges. This could be the serious illness or injury of you or someone close to you, it could be the loss of someone you love, or some other traumatic event. These challenges can be devastating, affecting every aspect of your life and can make coming to work difficult. For many, there can also be practical arrangements to sort out such as medical treatment, long term care provision, finding a home, legal matters and, in the case of death, funeral arrangements.

If you're experiencing a crisis or traumatic life event, we want to support you. Please talk to your manager and ask them for the support you need. We'll always handle these matters sensitively and confidentiality will be maintained, as far as possible.

In this policy you'll find information about what support is available in these circumstances, how to request time off, what pay you'll receive and more.

Please note, if this policy refers to additional guidance, FAQs, online forms, or training, these are accessible to University colleagues on our [People Hub](#).

2. Who is Covered by This Policy?

This policy applies to all employees of the University.

3. Compassionate Leave

If you experience one of the following critical life events, we'll give you up to one working week of paid time off work:

- Sudden critical illness or serious accident involving a partner/ dependant.
- Life changing/terminal diagnosis (given to you, or to a partner/ dependant).
- End-of-life care for a partner/ dependant.
- Any other unplanned major life event (for example, significant relationship breakdown/ separation, removal of children, breakdown of adoption placement, eviction/homelessness).

We understand how distressing these situations can be, so we want to support you.

Compassionate leave can be used to support a loved one at the end of life, for example to make care arrangements; spend some time with them to say goodbye and be with them at the time of death. It can be used to come to terms with a life-changing diagnosis for you or a loved one, access support services, attend medical appointments and so on. Or, in the case of a relationship breakdown, it can be used to sort out matters like housing and childcare arrangements, legal affairs and access support services.

4. Bereavement Leave

If you lose someone very close to you, we'll give you up to one working week of paid time off work. This might be a partner, a parent, a sibling, or someone from your chosen family. For other relationships, the time off will normally be less, usually up to one day's paid leave. But we know every situation and family is different and some situations may need more or less time. Sometimes, you'll just need a day to attend a funeral, but you may need longer if you need to travel or you're responsible for making the arrangements. We understand that different religious practices may impact what time off you need too.

And just so you know, when we say parent, this can be a biological parent, an adoptive or foster parent, a stepparent, guardian, or someone else who had responsibility for raising you.

5. Parental Bereavement Leave

Losing a child is a devastating experience. If you lose a child, or your baby is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy, we'll give you four working weeks of paid Parental Bereavement Leave.

You're entitled to this leave if you're the biological parent, adoptive parent, parent of a child born to a surrogate, the partner of the child's parent, or the child was in your care (for example, foster parents).

The four working weeks of paid parental bereavement leave is inclusive of any statutory parental bereavement pay you may be eligible for during the first two weeks.

You don't need to take all the leave at once, but it must be taken within 56 weeks following your child's death. So, you could take some time straight away and save some leave to take later for

significant events, such as the anniversary of your child's birthday. Leave must be taken in minimum blocks of one week, but we'll always try to be flexible where we can, so please talk to us about what you need.

Just so you know, you're entitled to parental bereavement leave in addition to any other family leave you may be on, for example maternity, adoption, maternity support (paternity), or shared parental leave, so you can take your parental bereavement leave after your family leave has finished. You can find more information in our [Family Leave Policies](#).

6. Requesting Leave

If you need to use leave under this policy, tell your manager as early as possible and discuss the situation.

We know that the impact of bereavement or other distressing situations affect everyone differently and can impact you at different times, so we will bear this in mind and always try to be flexible.

Leave can be taken in one single block or in separate blocks and is available for a period of 56 weeks after the death of a loved one or after the occurrence of any other critical life event covered by this policy.

7. Keeping in Touch

We understand that every situation will be different, and the needs of individual staff will vary, so we'll always try to be flexible in our approach. But it's still important that we apply this policy in a way that is fair and equitable to everyone. To help us do this, we ask you to:

- Let your manager know straight away what has happened and what support you need.
- Discuss and agree with your manager how and when you'll keep in contact.
- Let your manager know if your circumstances change.

Any fraudulent claims for time off under this policy will be dealt with under our [Disciplinary Procedure](#).

8. Returning to Work After Leave

We understand that life events such as serious illness, death, and separation/ divorce can be devastating and know that distress and grief can last a lot longer than the timeframes outlined in this policy. If you think you need more time off, talk to your manager about the options available to you.

Under our [agile working arrangements](#), you can discuss and agree with your manager ways to work in a more flexible way to suit your individual needs (for example, flexibility with start and finish times, lunch breaks and so on). This approach is useful if you think you only need this flexibility on an irregular or occasional basis.

Alternatively, if you think you need something more formal, such as longer-term changes to your working arrangements, under our [Flexible Working](#) policy we may be able to agree a contractual change to your working hours, pattern, or location to help you better balance your work and caring responsibilities.

When you're ready to come back to work, your manager will discuss with you what support you might need. In some cases, coming back on a phased (gradual) basis may make things a little easier, and we'll always try to be flexible and adjust hours and workloads where we can.

9. Further Information and Support

If you have any queries about this policy, please talk to your manager or contact [Human Resources](#). Further information and support can also be found on our [Wellbeing Hub](#).

If you're a manager, please read the accompanying [Bereavement & Compassionate Leave Manager Guidance](#) (staff login required) and seek advice from Human Resources and your Head of Department where you'd like to exercise discretion to give more paid leave than outlined in this policy.

And remember, our free and independent Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider, can also provide confidential support. Visit our [Wellbeing Hub](#) for more information.

10. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed by Human Resources on a regular basis. To see when the next review is due, please see our [Policy Review Schedule](#) (staff login required) on our People Hub.