



University of
St Andrews

Adverse weather

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 There are occasions when severe or adverse weather creates difficulties for University employees to attend the workplace either on time or at all. There are so many potential situations resulting from adverse weather, all of which have different impacts, that detailed and concise guidelines on how to manage every eventuality are not possible.
- 1.2 This policy is intended to provide advice of a general nature to assist Heads of Schools/Units in dealing with adverse weather situations and for all staff in outlining the process and options in the event of a difficulty in attending work due to adverse weather.
- 1.3 Examples of circumstances where this policy may be used include, but are not limited to:
 - Severe snowfall, flooding and other weather conditions which make travelling hazardous or cause roads to be closed;
 - The use of transport, either private or public, is severely affected by the weather;
 - Severe weather conditions which affect an employee's medical condition.
- 1.4 This guidance inevitably will not cover all circumstances. Information regarding Airspace and flight restrictions at airports is covered in [Section 5](#).

2. Key principles

- 2.1 This guidance is based on the principle that every employee will make all reasonable efforts to attend work and that non-attendance is caused by adverse or severe weather conditions. It is a key principle of this guidance that the University does not expect any employee to put themselves or others at risk in travelling to and from work.
- 2.2 The University will be deemed to be open unless a specific announcement is publicised via the University website, local radio (e.g. Radio Scotland, Kingdom FM, Tay FM) or via a message from the Office of the Principal or the Director of Human Resources.
- 2.3 If an employee is unable to attend work or expects to be delayed, they should report the absence/delay as early as possible, ideally before their scheduled start time and at least within 1 hour of their start time or as soon as reasonably practical. Failure to notify the Head of School/Unit that an employee is unable to attend work without a reasonable explanation would count as unauthorised absence which would be unpaid and in a severe case, might result in formal disciplinary action being invoked.

3. General guidelines

3.1 Travelling to and from work

- 3.1.1 Normally employees of course choose where they live and how they travel to work. However, if travel arrangements are affected by adverse weather then it is expected that the employee will make every effort to attend work by making alternative arrangements. All possible travel to work methods should be considered. For example:
 - If public transport is still operating, then it would be expected that the employee uses this mode of transport, even if the journey to work might take longer than usual;
 - Changing the times of travel to allow for roads to be cleared or gritted;
 - Using an alternative route/transport method;

- Car sharing with other employees.

3.1.2 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. A reasonable distance will depend on individual mobility as well as current or future weather conditions.

3.1.3 In situations of adverse weather when the Police or other external agencies are advising only to travel in emergency situations, or the University is closed due to severe weather conditions then employees are not expected to come to work. In these situations, there will be no detriment to salary or holiday entitlement.

3.1.4 In all other circumstances unpaid or annual leave will be deducted if all efforts to attend work have not been exhausted.

3.2 Time off and pay

3.2.1 Employees must genuinely be unable to get to their place of work or must reasonably attempt to attend work (depending on weather conditions). In line with this policy employees must report their absence and make every reasonable effort to attend work on every day they are due to attend work. It is reasonable to expect staff, who normally drive to work, to use public transport or to walk a reasonable distance.

3.2.2 Where an employee is unable to attend work due to adverse weather, the following options apply:

- Annual leave;
- Time in lieu/work the hours back, if that is possible, and in keeping with the nature of their role;
- Work from home, if their role allows this, and there is sufficient work to allow for this to happen;
- Take unpaid leave.

3.2.3 It must be agreed with the Head of School/Unit which of the above options will apply. Heads of Schools/Units are responsible for having systems in place to ensure the recording of such information. There is no standard rule about which option is most appropriate, but Heads of School/Unit are advised to consider each situation on its merits and to apply consistent treatment across their School/Unit as far as possible.

3.2.4 If an employee can attend work but arrives late, or if the University declares a closure (whether for a full day or an early closure), they will receive full pay or no detriment to leave.

3.3 Absence due to responsibility of dependants

3.3.1 There may be circumstances when an employee's ability to travel or attend work is affected by a need to provide emergency care for their dependants (for example, school closures), then this is dealt with by the Special Leave Policy.

3.4 Disability or medical conditions

3.4.1 If an employee has a medical condition or disability, then this may have a greater impact in severe weather conditions. Heads of School/Unit should consider the impact of severe

weather on employees with a disability or known debilitating illness which may affect their ability to attend work.

- 3.4.2 Debilitating illnesses are those that significantly interfere with the activities of daily living. These include, but are not limited to, arthritis, diabetes, spinal cord injury or heart disease.

4. Early release from work

- 4.1 If the University is open and the weather becomes hazardous, employees should only leave once approval has been sought from their Head of School/Unit or an announcement has been made by the Office of the Principal or Director of Human Resources.
- 4.2 In the case of worsening weather, or particularly hazardous driving conditions, where an employee is clearly concerned about travelling home, Heads of School/Unit can make a judgement call to allow the employee to go home in advance of an announcement from the Office of the Principal or the Director of Human Resources. However, any such absence must count against annual leave for any employee being permitted to leave early. If, within 2 hours, of the employee leaving, the Office of the Principal or the Director of Human Resources advises that all out-of-town staff should go home, the absence will not count as annual leave.
- 4.3 Dependent on the weather conditions, Heads of Schools/Units are asked to remember that normally only staff who live outside St Andrews would be allowed home in the event of severe weather. All other staff are expected to work normally and cover operations as best they can or if they have caring responsibilities to take leave under the Special Leave Policy.
- 4.4 If an employee chooses to leave early without approval from their Head of School/Unit; they will have the time deducted, from their annual leave entitlement and formal disciplinary action may be invoked.

5. Travel restrictions

- 5.1 Employees who are away on University business and are unable to return to work as a result of travel restrictions should inform their Head of School/Unit. In this situation employees will not suffer detriment to their salary or annual leave entitlement. This principle will only apply if the employee has explored all alternative arrangements and they have notified their Head of School/Unit. Employees must explore alternative means of transport to ensure that they return at the earliest opportunity.
- 5.2 Employees who away on personal business using annual leave and are unable to return to work as a result of Travel Restrictions should inform their Head of School/Unit. In this situation employees will be granted up to 3 days additional leave and dependant on the circumstances, any additional time will be deducted from their annual leave entitlement. It is expected that the employee explores alternative arrangements and they have notified their Head of School/Unit of their estimated return as soon as possible.
- 5.3 Travel restrictions include, but not limited to, airspace restrictions; ferry and train disruptions; or strikes affecting transport.

6. Implementing the policy

- 6.1 As a general rule, it is helpful for Heads of School/Unit to ensure that their staff understand how these guidelines will be implemented. For example:

- Ensuring all staff understand the reporting procedures of delayed arrival or non-attendance due to adverse weather;
- Clarifying which types of work are more suitable to working at home, should the occasion arise.

6.2 Heads of School/Unit 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 the provision of services to students or the health and safety implications for individual members of staff.

6.3 Where Heads or managers have specific queries, [Human Resources](#) will provide additional support and advice.

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