



Polasáí agus Nósanna Imeachta/Policies and Procedures

<b>Code</b>	QA128
<b>Title</b>	Staff Bereavement Policy
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Director of Human Resources
<b>Date</b>	January 2023; Latest review date: 18/09/2023
<b>Approved By</b>	University Management Team

**1.0 Purpose**

Death is an inevitable and normal part of life and something that all of us must face at some point in our lives. University of Galway is committed to providing a supportive approach to employees who have been bereaved.

The purpose of the policy is to set out the provisions regarding special leave with pay (Bereavement Leave) for an employee in the event of the death of a relative.

The policy also sets out the expected support a bereaved employee can expect from the University as well as endeavouring to enable managers and colleagues to effectively deal with grief.

**2.0 Description**

The below sections detail the provisions of the policy.

**2.1 Scope**

All Employees of University of Galway are eligible to apply and there is no minimum service requirement for bereavement leave.

**2.2 Bereavement Leave and Entitlements**

Bereavement leave is a paid period of absence from work granted to an employee because of the death of a close relative or family member.



Employees are entitled to one of the following in the event of the death of a family member:

Relationship to Employee	Amount of Paid Leave Granted
Where there is a death of a spouse (including a cohabiting partner), child (including adopted children and children being cared for on the basis of 'in loco parentis') or any person in a relationship of domestic dependency.  <b>See Appendix 1: a</b>	20 working days
Where there is a stillbirth or prenatal death of a child after twenty-four weeks pregnancy.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The mother of the child will get maternity leave. Please see maternity leave policy.</li></ul> <b>See Appendix 1: d</b>	10 working days
Where there is the death of another immediate relative.  <b>See Appendix 1: b</b>	5 working days
Where there is the death of an aunt, uncle, niece, or nephew.  <b>See Appendix 1: c</b>	1 working day
<b>Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bereavement leave is granted only at the time of the bereavement - <b>See Appendix 1: f</b></li><li>There is no requirement for an employee to avail of the full amount of bereavement leave as outlined above - <b>See Appendix 1: g</b></li></ul>	

### 2.3 Application for bereavement leave:

An employee must notify their Line Manager of any absence as soon as possible, confirming that they will be applying for bereavement leave.

The employee must submit a [Bereavement Leave application form](#) online to their manager as soon as possible after the bereavement. Leave days should be taken consecutively around the time of the bereavement or funeral.



## **2.4 Attending a funeral abroad or Traveling Abroad to make funeral arrangements:**

With prior agreement from your line manager and HR, bereavement leave may be postponed to allow you attend a funeral taking place at a later date. In the case where the employee must travel abroad to make funeral arrangements or attend a funeral in respect of an immediate relative, special leave with pay in excess of the limits for bereavement leave may be granted to facilitate the travel at the discretion of the Manager in conjunction with the HR Office.

## **2.5 Unpaid Leave**

Unpaid leave may be granted on compassionate grounds for the purposes of dealing with the death of an immediate relative. Employees should speak to their manager if they have additional leave requirements.

## **2.6 Communication about Bereavement:**

Line Managers should consult with bereaved staff about their wishes in relation to communication of funeral notices. While many will wish their colleagues to be informed about the funeral, some will prefer to keep this information private. If the bereaved colleague wants the information shared, line managers should communicate the news of a bereavement as soon as possible to staff in the unit so that colleagues are aware and can offer support if they wish.

## **2.7 Return to Work**

We acknowledge returning to work following a bereavement might be difficult. We encourage the employee and Line manager to discuss communication about the return to colleagues, whether you want people to acknowledge the situation or not and so on. We also encourage meeting the manager or a colleague outside the workplace on that first day and arriving together.

In certain circumstances a return to work may require support from the University in the form of phased return or returning to alternate hours. Any such arrangement should be agreed before the return with your management and confirmed to HR.

## **2.8 Bereaved Employee Support**

University of Galway understands the complexity of Grief. It is not linear, and the effects of grief vary from person to person. We understand too, that individuals can experience difficulties relating to grief at any time including many years after the bereavement.

The University will provide counselling support to employees requiring professional support in coming to terms with the loss, this can be sourced through the [Employee Assistance Service](#).

There is support available through the National Bereavement Support Line 1800 80 70 77 (10am – 1pm Mon – Fri).

The University is currently training a team of Mental Health First Aiders, details of which will be published on the HR website.

The HR office will run regular grief training for all. Please contact [learninganddevelopment@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:learninganddevelopment@universityofgalway.ie) to register your interest.

Line managers should engage with their HR Business Partner or HR Contact for additional resources.



## 2.9 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Interpretation of this policy must be flexible to support the multi-cultural environment within which we work. We understand different cultures respond to death in different ways and we will be supportive insofar as possible. To support this, employees should communicate their specific needs to their Line Manager or HR.

## 2.10 Death of a colleague

In the untimely death of a colleague, please contact your HR Partner or HR Senior Manager for additional support.

## 2.11 Acknowledgement

The University of Galway acknowledges the support and resources of the Irish Hospice Foundation in developing this policy.

## 3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Name	Responsibility
HR Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Owner</li> <li>• Administer Bereavement Leave</li> </ul>
Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must inform line manager of the bereavement and complete application for bereavement leave</li> <li>• Familiarize yourself with the bereavement policy</li> </ul>
Line Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarize yourself with the bereavement policy</li> <li>• Speak to the bereaved employee</li> <li>• If permitted, communicate the Bereavement to the team, if possible, share funeral details</li> <li>• Must inform the employee of bereavement policy and bereavement leave entitlement (s).</li> <li>• Review and sign off bereavement leave form</li> <li>• Engage with the employee before their return to work to make the return as easy as possible.</li> <li>• Meet with employee on their return and check what support is required (Workload compensation e.g.)</li> <li>• Post bereavement check in regularly with employee (regular 1:1)</li> <li>• Attend Management Bereavement Training</li> </ul>



#### 4.0 Related Information

##### Appendix 1: Bereavement Leave Entitlement

Entitlements are set out in Circular [Bereavement Leave in the Civil Service \(assets.gov.ie\)](#) which were [extended to Education Sector](#) on 3rd November 2022.

- a) Where there is a death of a spouse (including a cohabiting partner), child (including adopted children and children being cared for on the basis of 'in loco parentis') or any person in a relationship of domestic dependency, the amount of bereavement leave shall be twenty working days.
- b) Where there is the death of another immediate relative, the amount shall be five working days. For the purposes of this policy, an 'immediate relative' refers to a father, step-father, mother, step-mother, brother, step-brother, half-brother, brother-in-law, sister, step-sister, half-sister, sister-in-law, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandfather, grandmother or grandchild. It also refers to a similar immediate relative of a cohabiting partner.
- c) Where there is the death of an extended relative, including an uncle, aunt, niece or nephew the amount of bereavement leave shall be one day. In exceptional circumstances, where the employee has lived with the deceased at the time of their death, or has to take charge of funeral arrangements, this limit may be extended to five working days.
- d) In the event of a stillbirth or prenatal death of a child after twenty four weeks pregnancy, bereavement leave of ten days may be granted to (i) the father of the child, (ii) the spouse, civil partner or cohabitant, as the case may be, of the mother of the child, or (iii) a parent of the child under Section 5 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 where the child is a donor conceived child within the meaning of Part 2 of that Act\* \*Unfortunately, early pregnancy loss (before 24 weeks) is not considered in the circular and no specific bereavement leave applies. We would, however, encourage affected parents to speak to their line manager or HR contact so we can appropriately support.
- e) In the case where the employee has to travel abroad to make funeral arrangements in respect of an immediate relative, special leave with pay in excess of the limits for bereavement leave may be granted at the discretion of the HR Office, having consulted with the relevant manager.
- f) Bereavement leave is granted only at the time of the bereavement. Bereavement leave cannot be substituted for any form of leave, other than annual leave. If the bereavement occurs when an employee is on annual leave, the annual leave can be replaced with bereavement leave and the annual leave restored.
- g) There is no requirement for an employee to avail of the full amount of bereavement leave as outlined above. In certain situations, an employee may wish to return to work sooner.



**Appendix 2: Helpful language and behaviour tips when supporting a bereaved employee**

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be caring and compassionate.</li><li>• Allow time and space for the bereaved person. It can be hard to formulate thoughts and recall facts after a bereavement.</li><li>• Offer your condolences, such as 'I'm sorry xxx has died.'</li><li>• Ask how they are coping.</li><li>• Say 'What do you need from me?' Wants and needs may change over the course of the grieving process. Varied help may be in the form of a practical task.</li><li>• At times they may wish to talk about the person who has died. At other times they may not wish to, for fear of getting tearful or upset in the workplace. Follow the wishes of the person 'in the moment'. Don't feel offended if an offer of support is rejected. Respect any decisions; however, reassure of your offer of support if they change their mind.</li><li>• Be available – let them know you're there to listen or just provide company, if that would be of help to them. Some people find a need to repeat their recollection of the event to help them make sense of it.</li><li>• Allow them to discuss what is of most concern. Validate their circumstances during this difficult time.</li><li>• Be aware that certain dates such as inquests, birthdays and the anniversary of a death may have an impact on the bereaved colleague.</li><li>• Remember that the full impact of a bereavement may not be felt until sometime after the death</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ignore the situation.</li><li>• Assume you know how the bereaved employee is feeling – every bereavement is unique.</li><li>• Give advice.</li><li>• Compare your past losses with the bereaved employees'. You are taking the attention away from their loss onto yours.</li><li>• Say anything that may minimise or undermine the loss, such as 'we all have to go sometime' or 'she had a good innings.'</li><li>• Say anything to make light of bereavement, such as 'time will heal'; 'pull yourself together'; 'it must be a great relief for you'; 'this will help you move on.'</li><li>• Assume that just because they are back at work they are 'over it' and 'back to normal'.</li></ul>
<b>CIPD: A guide to bereavement support</b>	



## 5.0 Related Documentation

- [Bereavement Leave application form](#)