
Disconnecting from Work Policy

Institutional Manual

Approving Authority: Office of the President

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Date of Last Review/Revision: N/A

Office of Accountability: Executive Director, Finance and Administration

Administrative Responsibility: Human Resources

Policy Statement

St. Jerome's University is committed to creating a healthy workplace and strives to achieve an employee-focused, sustainable work environment by prioritizing the health and well-being of all employees. We encourage and support our employees to prioritize their own social, emotional, spiritual, physical and psychological health, safety and the quality of their lives.

Disconnecting from work is important for an individual's wellbeing, and helps employees achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance. Disconnecting from work *means to not engage in work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work* outside of working hours.

To support our employees in balancing their working and personal lives, whether working in the workplace, remotely or flexibly, we have implemented this Disconnecting from Work Policy (the "Policy") to encourage employees to disconnect from work outside of their working hours in accordance with and subject to this Policy.

This Policy should be read alongside the University's associated policies, collective agreements, individual employment contracts, any relevant and applicable legislation, and any other policy that may become applicable and/or relevant.

Scope

This Policy applies to all employees, as defined by the Ontario *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (the "ESA"), whether they are working remotely, in the workplace, flexibly or are mobile. For clarity, "employee" under this Policy means those employees of the University who are considered employees under the ESA, including staff, faculty, contract academic staff, teaching assistants, research assistants, and casual staff.

Principles

The University supports and aims to foster a workplace culture that promotes, and values disconnecting from work and so will take steps to ensure that all employees are:

- a) informed of what their working hours and/or expectations of work are reasonably expected to be and are informed of the circumstances, if any, in which they will be expected to engage in work-related communications outside their working hours;

- b) able to take applicable meal, rest periods and hours free from work as required by law, contract, or applicable collective agreement language; and
- c) able to take vacation or other leave entitlements as required by law, contract, or applicable collective agreement language.

Supervisor Obligations

Supervisors will:

(d) facilitate implementation of the University's obligations under this Policy for those employees they supervise, including informing employees of the circumstances, if any, in which they will be expected to engage in work-related communications outside their working hours;

- d) be mindful and considerate of employees' working hours; and
- e) respond to questions or concerns regarding disconnecting from work from those employees they supervise.

Employee Obligations

The University expects all employees to consider the following in the course of their work:

- f) use appropriate tools to communicate and update their working status and availability (e.g., out-of-office messages, notification of upcoming vacations etc.), as applicable;
- g) be considerate of colleagues' working hours (e.g., by not expecting answers or responses outside of working hours);
- h) take their applicable meal and rest periods and hours free from work as set out in their individual employment contracts, policies, by law, or applicable collective agreement; SJU Policy: Disconnecting From Work
- i) in a timely manner, speak with their supervisor or appropriate leader if they feel their workload is preventing them from being able to take meal, rest, break, or periods free from work that they are entitled to, or otherwise disconnect from work;
- j) request and take their allotted vacation entitlements as set out in their individual employment contracts, policies, or applicable collective agreement.

Ability to Disconnect from Work

Though all employees are entitled to the ability to disconnect from work, the times of day and the days of the week are likely to vary significantly. The University recognizes that there are substantial and significant differences between the working times and days of its employees and employee groups. The University therefore acknowledges the need for supervisors and employees to have discretion in setting appropriate and agreeable times for work, subject to the duties and obligations of the employee's position, an employee's employment contract, applicable collective agreement and/or their minimum statutory entitlements under the Employment Standards Act.

Nothing in the Policy precludes the University or other employees of the University from contacting colleagues, vendors/other third parties or other employees outside of what may be considered working hours or standard business hours, subject to any rights or entitlements the receiving colleague or employee may have under their employment contract, applicable collective agreement and/or their minimum statutory entitlements under the ESA.

This Policy does not afford employees a “right to disconnect” beyond what is within their individual employment contract, applicable collective agreement and/or their minimum statutory entitlements under the ESA, which may include rights or entitlements speaking to: hours of work and hours free from work, overtime pay, meal and/or rest periods, public holidays and public holiday pay, and vacation.

Nothing in this Policy is intended to amend or supersede any grievance procedure or other aspect of any applicable collective agreement.

Reporting Concerns

All employees are expected to report to their supervisor or appropriate leader any concerns or issues they may have which they feel are impacting their ability to disconnect from work.

Employees will not be subject to reprisal for reporting such concerns as outlined above or for inquiring about, exercising, or attempting to exercise any rights as provided under the ESA.

All employees are also strongly encouraged to seek professional and/or medical assistance as they see fit if such concerns relate to their health and wellbeing, and the University has resources and supports available to employees. Employees can contact the Employee Assistance Program provider, or where there are medical concerns, can connect with Occupational Health for support.

Posting, Notice and Retention

The University shall provide a copy of this Policy to each employee, regardless of their position within 30 calendar days of implementation. Should any changes be made to the Policy after its implementation, the University shall provide each employee of the University a copy of the revised Policy within 30 days of the changes being made.

The University shall provide a copy of this Policy to all new employees upon onboarding and within 30 calendar days of the employee commencing employment with the University.

The University shall retain a copy of this Policy and any revised version of this Policy for a period of three years after it ceases to be in effect.