



**College of Engineering,
Mathematics and
Physical Sciences**

Working Practices

College Executive Group

1st April 2015

Stephen Eichhorn

Brief summary of key information/context:

Universities are a continually changing culture with increasing demands on our time. In order to create a healthy working environment it is necessary to reflect upon the practices that we adopt, to ensure that we do not create an environment that is prohibitive to certain groups of people or creates unreasonable expectations that may impact on everyone's work life balance. This is applicable to all staff employed in the college, in all roles.

Staff should also not feel under pressure to adopt practices that diminish their work-life balance; it is important that we create a culture that allows members of staff to contribute to the University, to participate in workplace activities, to have the same opportunities, to access critical information that may help their careers, or simply to be engaged and involved. So, one of these measures for example, is to ensure those who may have circumstances (e.g. childcare) are not asked to work beyond core hours, so potentially they are excluded due to other commitments.

Equally, people should feel able to work flexibly, outside of core hours, should that be more appropriate for them.

Staff going on and returning from maternity, paternity, adoption or sick leave (or other forms of time away from work that maybe agreed) should feel supported by their line manager and by the college so that they return in a supported and engaged manner, they are welcomed into the workplace and in particular are not disadvantaged from a period of absence.

This proposal aims to set up the 'rules of engagement' for the college and may be the start of a longer list of proposals that aim to help improve our working environments.

Statement and Measures:

- It was agreed to have a clear statement on the working environment & culture we wish to encourage in the College:

"The College recognises the significant roles and contribution that colleagues have in the success of the College and the University. We are striving to create a working environment that is supportive, engaging, challenging, and successful and a desirable place to work, whilst respectful of individual's circumstances or commitments outside of the workplace. In order to do so it is necessary that all of us reflect upon the practices and behaviours that we adopt, to ensure that we do not create an environment that is prohibitive to certain groups of people or creates unreasonable expectations that may impact on employees work life balance."

Some of the measures we could consider include:

- That people should think carefully about the tone of emails sent out of core-hours (evenings and weekends i.e. no 'urgent' mark at the weekend, expectation of a response) and that staff should be under no obligation to respond during these times. People can however send emails, due to flexible working practices.
- Meetings should be timed within core hours and should not take place from 9-10am and 4-5pm (where possible – meetings outside of core hours should only take place if there is agreement from all attendees).
- We adopt a policy of allowing the holding of inaugural lectures at lunchtimes (12-2). We recognise that staff may want to hold their lecture in the evenings, making it a publicly accessible event, so will keep that flexibility in place.
- Where travel between campuses is necessary (Penryn-Cornwall) meetings should be timed between 11-3pm (where possible), unless otherwise agreed by those attending.
- Staff, with childcare or caring responsibilities, are not put under pressure to take lecture slots outside of 9-5pm. Requests for this will be given due consideration.
- Staff about to go on maternity, paternity or adoption leave have a discussion with their line manager about requirements to cover their responsibilities during their absence, this may not be possible in all cases but should be considered carefully.
- That special consideration be given to staff returning from maternity, paternity or adoption leave and that a discussion is had with them regarding their requirements e.g. lecture timings/term free of teaching or flexible working patterns.
- We foster a supportive culture that recognises caring responsibilities are faced by both men and women, staff and students and caring can include caring for relatives as well as dependents and children.
- We more fully utilise the Equality Impact Assessment framework to reflect on proposed operation or strategic plans to transparently assess the impact of initiatives before we implement them e.g. dual locational doctoral training centres and the potential impact on staff.
- As a Senior Management Team we will dedicate time once per year to review the E&D profile of all our staff (Academic, Professional Services and Technical) and student population against a national benchmark.
- In arranging internal and external events and conferences we incorporate E&D practices into a minimum standard checklist for all attending to encourage inclusivity e.g. as well as considering timings and locations, ensure that facilities are clearly shown for example accessible facilities, where breastfeeding facilities are for nursing mothers and balance and profile of speakers (e.g. gender inclusive).

Please note, all references to maternity, paternity and adoption leave are in line with University policy.