



cetb

Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Chorcaí
*Cork Education and
Training Board*

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Introduction

The health, safety and wellbeing of our employees is of the utmost importance to us and we encourage and support you to prioritise your own wellbeing. Disconnecting from work and work devices is vital for your wellbeing, and to help you achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance.

To encourage and support our employees in balancing their working and personal lives, whether they work standard hours in the workplace, work remotely or flexibly, we have developed a 'Right to Disconnect Policy', which includes best practice guidance as set out by the WRC Code of Practice on the right to disconnect.

Cork ETB recognises that every employee is entitled to switch off outside of normal working hours and enjoy their free time away from work without being disturbed, unless there is an emergency or agreement to do so.

There may be occasions where contact occurs, including for example where business and operational reasons require contact outside of normal working hours and depending on the nature of an employee's role.

Wellbeing

The Right to Disconnect is a collective responsibility of all and sits within the broader objective of ensuring the safety, welfare and wellbeing of employees. Employees, including those engaging in flexible working arrangements or remote working, are reminded to switch off from work and work devices outside their normal working hours and while on leave.

Employees are encouraged to familiarise themselves with their break entitlements as set out for their particular location of work and to ensure that they are availing of these. If an employee is unable to avail of their rest break, they should inform their manager.

Employees working remotely are encouraged to create and maintain boundaries between work and personal time.

Managers may do a wellbeing check with an employee where it is noticed that they are sending emails at odd hours as this may be sign that they are finding it difficult to manage their workload or 'switch off'.

Role of the organisation, our managers and employees

All employees have an active role to play in communication management and the reduction of unnecessary business communications outside normal working hours. The organisation encourages the ongoing cultivation of a culture where our employees feel they can disconnect from work and work-related devices and this necessitates a joint approach by the organisation, our managers, and employees. Some of the respective obligations include:

The role of the organisation:

- To provide information to employees on their working time, in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- To ensure a safe workplace, in line with the health and safety legislation.

- To not penalise an employee for acting in compliance with any relevant provision of the health and safety legislation.

The role of the employee:

- To ensure that they manage their own working time and take care to protect their safety, health and welfare and the health and safety of co-workers, in line with the health and safety legislation and seek support in doing so if necessary.
- To cooperate fully with any appropriate mechanism utilised by the organisation to record working time, including when working remotely.
- To utilise notification options available to inform colleagues of periods when they are not contactable e.g. annual leave etc.
- To respect the working time of colleagues and other contacts (including periods of leave)

The role of the manager:

- Managers in particular play a central role in the successful implementation of this policy and may be given additional training and support as needed. Managers also have a duty to respect their team members' right to disconnect and should provide a good example for their team.
- Legitimate business circumstances where out of hours contact may occur is where an event necessitates the input from an employee whose input and/or presence is critical to the business needs. In such circumstances the question to consider is whether the event is critical in nature to the continuity of the business or whether the event can be dealt with during normal working hours.

Working Hours

Normal Working hours are defined as per a persons contract of employment. For the majority of staff the span of a working day is generally between the hours of 8 am to 6 pm Monday to Friday.

Communications

Electronic & Phone Communications

We respect your personal time and expect you to disconnect from work e-mails and work communications outside of normal working hours.

We also understand and appreciate that within our organisation/organisation people may work non-standard/widely differing patterns of work, so what is the "norm" for one may be different for another. Due to differing/non-standard patterns of work in the organisation, some employees may send communications at times which are inopportune for other employees, e.g. early mornings/late nights.

Outside your normal working hours or standard office hours, (such as early morning/late nights/weekends), may be an opportune time for you to send an email, without any intent to

disturb the recipient or in expectation of a speedy answer. In that event, bear in mind the following:

- Try to only check and send e-mails during normal working hours where possible, but we are also mindful of the requirements of those who wish to work in a more flexible manner.
- The sender should give due consideration to the timing of their communication and potential for disturbance. The recipient should understand that they will not be expected to respond until their working time recommences. If you are sending emails outside the normal hours of the working day, please also consider other people's working hours:
 - Emails sent through the Cork ETB Domain will have the following disclaimer at the end; . *"I have sent this email at a time that is convenient for me. I do not expect you to respond to it outside of your own working hours."*
 - Where disclaimer is not contained within the email, send the e-mail with a signature disclaimer at the end, e.g. *"I have sent this email at a time that is convenient for me. I do not expect you to respond to it outside of your own working hours."*
 - Consider drafting the email and sending it during normal working hours or using the 'delay send' option and set it to a specified time on the next working day
 - Always consider the tone/contents/context of texts and emails and other electronic communications (e.g instant messaging apps).
- Please ensure that your out-of-office notifications are properly activated with dates specified and that when you are out of the office and that your out-of-office message correctly directs the recipient to the appropriate colleague. Please respect out-of-office notifications when you receive them from others.
- In the case of an urgent or time-sensitive situation after normal working hours, please consider sending a text or making a phone call rather than an email.
- Employees should not feel that they must respond to social communications from colleagues outside of their working hours

Meetings

- While meetings can be crucial to strengthen connections between individuals and teams, individual teams and managers are encouraged to review the frequency and timing of meetings they hold to ensure optimum use of time and allow colleagues time to work outside of and in between meetings.
- Avoid scheduling meetings outside of our core hours 9.00 am to 5.00 pm or during lunch hours, unless absolutely necessary. Ensure to block out time in your diary to hold time for your breaks
- Respect people's time by only inviting them to meetings where their presence is necessary. Share and adopt meeting best practices for example ensure there is a clear agenda with relevant material shared in advance, and actions are recorded and shared post the meeting.

Reporting concerns

Employees will not be reprimanded for failing to answer phone calls, emails, or messages outside of their normal working hours.

If you encounter problems in availing of your right to disconnect, please speak to the person(s) in question in the first instance if you feel comfortable to do so. If you feel that you cannot approach the person directly, then you should approach your manager or another line manager, [or a member of HR] with the objective of resolving the issue quickly and informally. If an informal process has not been successful in resolving the concern, then the formal organisation grievance procedure may be utilised.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following; Dignity at Work, ICT suite of Policies, Data Protection Policy and Remote Working Arrangements.

We reserve the right to amend and update this policy over time in line with best practice, learnings and any changes in legislation.

Signed: 

Denis Leamy, Chief Executive

Date: 22nd September 2021