UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

DISCONNECTING FROM WORK POLICY

Policy Owner: Bursar & CAO
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1.0   PURPOSE

The University of St. Michael's College (USMC) is committed to fostering a safe and healthy work environment for all employees. Accordingly, this Policy sets out USMC's expectations around work-related communications in an effort to assist employees in disconnecting from work during appropriate times.

2.0   APPLICATION

This Policy applies to all University employees, including but not limited to all full-time, part-time, temporary, fixed-term contract, employees on leaves of absence or layoff, and directors, managers, supervisors and is subject to the provisions of any applicable law, regulation, employment contract or collective agreement, and should be read in conjunction with other applicable University policies and guidelines, including any of the foregoing related to working hours, on-call, stand-by, vacations, public holidays, and flexible work arrangements.

3.0   DISCONNECTING FROM WORK

 "Disconnecting from work" means not engaging 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.

4.0   WORKING HOURS

This Policy does not amend an employee's hours of work or rest periods. Employees' hours of work and rest periods are defined pursuant to their employment contracts, applicable collective agreement, university guidelines, or by agreement with the employees' managers in accordance with applicable employment standards legislation.

5.0   EXPECTATIONS REGARDING WORK-RELATED COMMUNICATIONS

In general, USMC does not expect employees to read or respond to work-related communications outside of their normal working hours, subject to the following exceptions:

a)   where operational or business needs require such communications and the employee has been given notice in advance;

b)   where such communications are required due to the nature of the employee's duties;

c)   where the employee's role is managerial or supervisory in nature, in which case operational or business needs may require communications outside of normal working hours;

d)   where the employee has been authorized to work flexible hours;

e)   in instances involving unforeseen operational or business needs;

f)   in cases of emergency;

g)   where such communication is required pursuant to another USMC policy, including call-in, standby, flexible work, or shift coverage policies that require employees to answer or respond to work-related communications

h)   in other situations that may arise, at the discretion of USMC.

6.0   TOOLS TO ENABLE DISCONNECTING FROM WORK

Practices and customs for disconnecting from work may differ across USMC depending upon the nature of the work and the circumstances of the employees in a department or on a particular team. Employees should address ideas or concerns relating to disconnecting from work with their managers.

The following tools may assist employees in disconnecting from work, where appropriate:

Automatic Replies – employees may consider enabling automatic replies indicating the dates that they are out of the office, the date they will return to the office, and an alternate point of contact during the employee's absence.

Outlook Calendars – Outlook calendar can be used to strategically book off desk time to attend to work; meetings, departments, and divisions can establish agreed upon

desk days where colleagues within these teams do not book meetings with others during a certain date or time. Time blocks can be put in calendars to protect meal breaks from interruption. Setting office hours in outlook can help those with more flexible schedules work within more defined hours to better disconnect from work.

Delay Delivery – employees may consider using the "delay delivery" function when sending e-mails if the timing of their communication may not align with that of the recipient (e.g. where the sender and recipient are in different time zones, or have different work schedules).

Vacation Alerts – employees may consider including a vacation alert in their signature block indicating the dates of an upcoming vacation.

E-mail Signatures – employees may consider including reference to the timing of their e-mail communications in their signature block (e.g. "*My working hours may not be your working hours. Please do not feel obligated to respond to this e-mail outside of your normal working hours.*").

7.0   IMPLEMENTATION

Employees with questions or concerns about this policy should contact their manager or Human Resources.

This policy is subject to change at the sole discretion of USMC. Employees will be notified of any such changes in accordance with applicable employment standards legislation.