



Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Dublin and Dún Laoghaire
Átha Cliath agus Dhún Laoghaire Education and Training Board

RIGHT TO DISCONNECT POLICY

1 Introduction

The health, safety and wellbeing of our employees is of the utmost importance to us and DDLETB encourages and supports 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, or work remotely we have developed a 'Right to Disconnect' policy, which includes best practice guidance around working hours, the use of technology and more.

DDLETB recognises that every employee is entitled to switch off outside normal working hours and enjoy their free time away from work without being disturbed. As an employer, we do not normally expect staff to work more than their contractual working hours. If you do receive a work email, or any other form of communication outside working hours, there is no expectation that you read it or respond until you are working. There may be occasions where contact occurs, including for example where business and operational reasons require contact outside normal working hours and depending on the nature of an employee's role.

2 The Role of the ETB, 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. DDLETB encourages the cultivation of a culture where our employees feel they can disconnect from work and work-related devices and this necessitates a joint approach by DDLETB, our managers, and employees. Some of the respective obligations include:

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2.1 The role of the ETB

It is the role of DDLETB to

- Provide information to employees on their working time, in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- Ensure a safe workplace, in line with the health and safety legislation.
- Not penalise an employee for acting in compliance with any relevant provision of the health and safety legislation.

2.2 The role of the employee

It is 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 to seek support in doing so if necessary.
- Co-operate fully with any appropriate mechanism utilised by DDLETB to record working time, including when working remotely.
- Respect the working time of colleagues and other contacts (including periods of leave).

2.3 The role of the manager

It is the role of the manager to

- Ensure the successful implementation of this policy
- Respect their team members' right to disconnect and provide a good example for their team.

3 Working Hours

For expected weekly working hours staff should refer to their individual contract of employment. We do not expect staff to work more than their contractual hours. If staff have to, this is considered overtime. Overtime must be agreed and approved in advance. We believe in staffing and allocating work that can be done within the working week. It is only in unusual or extraordinary circumstances that overtime should be required. We do seek flexibility and support for this when necessary, but it should not be a regular part of the working week.

3.1 Regular breaks and lunchtime

The Organisation and Working Time Act (OWT) provides in general, you are entitled to a

15-minute break when you have worked for 4 ½ hours. If you work more than 6

hours you are entitled to a 30-minute break, which can include the first 15-minute break. We want all our staff to take full breaks and lunchtimes. We do not want our staff working through lunches, whether they are in the office or remote working. It is vital staff have down time during the day too.

In addition to regular breaks, the OWT also provides for 11 consecutive hours rest in any period of 24 hours and you should normally get 24 consecutive hours rest in any period of 7 days. This means it is important you do not check emails or devices before you go to bed and first thing in the morning.

4 Communications

4.1 Electronic & Phone Communications

DDLETB respects your personal time and expects you to disconnect from work e-mails and work communications outside your normal working hours.

Outside your normal working hours or standard office hours (such as 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:
 - 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 your usual 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 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.

4.2 Meetings

- While meetings are a core part of how we work and 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 meetings.
- We ask those calling meetings to avoid scheduling meetings outside our core hours [9:00 to 5:15] or during lunch hours [1:00 to 2:00], unless absolutely necessary.
- 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 after the meeting.
- We also appreciate that if staff need to block time in their diary for vital work to be done, they should do so. Diary time is not just for meetings and because someone is 'free' in their diary does not mean they are not busy

Employees engaging in remote working, are reminded to switch off from work and work devices outside their normal working hours and while on leave. Employees working remotely are also encouraged to take steps to create boundaries between work and personal time.

5 Reporting concerns

If you encounter problems in availing of your right to disconnect, please speak to your line manager in the first instance if you feel comfortable to do so. If you feel that you cannot approach your line manager directly, then you should approach a member of HR or another line manager, 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 ETB grievance procedure may be utilised.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with our ICT policy, dignity at work and data protection policies.

DDLETB reserves the right to amend and update this policy over time in line with best practice, continuous improvement and any changes in legislation.

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