

Disconnect from Work Policy

Intent

Alma Mater Society of Queen's University understands that due to work-related pressures, the current landscape of work, or the working environment, employees may feel obligated to perform their job duties outside their normal working hours. Work-related pressure and feeling an inability to disconnect from the job can lead to stress and deterioration of mental and physical health. This policy has been established to support employee wellness, minimize excessive sources of stress, and ensure that employees feel they can disconnect from their work outside their regular working hours.

Terminology

Disconnecting from work: Not engaging in work-related communications, including e-mails, telephone calls, video calls, or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work.

Regular working hours: The time agreed to by an employee, as stated in their employment contract, or subsequently determined, they are meant to complete work for the Alma Mater Society of Queen's University.

Ceridian Dayforce: The online payroll system where time and attendance is maintained to log hours worked and to compensate employees.

Scope

This policy applies to all AMS employees.

Policy

1. Guidelines

An employee's time outside regular working hours is meant for the employee to recharge and spend as they wish and should not be used to complete work-related tasks; however, there may be a lack of separation between personal life, home, work and academic responsibilities that makes it difficult for employees to truly disconnect. Working remotely or from a home office can make employees feel as though they are "always on" or obligated to continue working or respond to communication, regardless of the time of day. Demands on time are never more prevalent for our staff than in the fall and winter term where there is an increased need for balance of school with work priorities.

The Alma Mater Society of Queen's University sees employee health and well-being as priorities while working and while away from work. We are committed to increasing overall employee health and wellness and providing employees with a positive work-life balance. Further, as a student-run organization, the AMS understands and appreciates that academics is the number one priority of all AMS student staff. While academics may take precedence over work, this does not absolve any student employee from their obligation to duly manage their time for work and school, communicate when unable to accomplish work tasks in a timely manner, and work with their direct report and/or team to maintain adequate coverage of their responsibilities. This policy is intended to promote these ideals by specifically detailing the company's expectations related to disconnecting from work.

2. Disconnecting from Work

Staff are entitled to disconnect from work outside regular working hours without fear of reprisal. All scheduled breaks should be taken and time off entitlements for non-work-related activities should be used each year. Employees are encouraged to set clear boundaries between work and their personal lives, regardless of their Executive-approved working arrangement, whether that be onsite, flexible work/academic schedule, remote work, or hybrid work.

Outside regular working hours and when disconnecting from work, employees:

- Should stop performing their job duties and work-related tasks;
- Temporarily disable incoming e-mails or Microsoft Teams messages to personal devices, during down time;
- Are not expected or required to respond to work-related communication outside their regular working hours, while on break, or during any paid or unpaid time off;
- Will not face repercussion or punishment for not communicating or for ceasing work;
- Should respect co-workers' time and should not expect them to respond, communicate, or complete work; and
- Should utilize Outlook capabilities to "send later," in order that emails not be received between the hours of 6:00pm and 7:00am or on Saturdays or Sundays, unless for emergency purposes.

3. Workload and Productivity

The Alma Mater Society of Queen's University understands that staff may want or need to work outside their regular working hours to meet a time-sensitive deadline or to attend to an urgent matter or emergency; however, staff should not regularly or frequently work outside their scheduled hours to complete or catch up on work.

Examples of exceptions might consist of:

- Approved Overtime
- On-call work
- Possible last-minute schedule changes

Employees who cannot manage their workload during their regular working hours should meet with their direct manager to evaluate their workload, priorities, and due dates.

Managers will work with employees to come up with a solution to ensure:

- The current or anticipated workload does not result in the employee working excess hours nor contribute to additional stress, burnout, or pressure to answer to non-emergent issues outside of working hours;
- Normal job duties can be completed during regular working hours; and
- Staff can remain productive and meet company goals and objectives;

Provided staff have made managers aware of their academic schedule, important deadlines, and exams, managers will make every effort to accommodate those needs.

4. Communication

Staff should not feel obligated to send or respond to work-related communication outside regular working hours. The AMS may occasionally send general communication to employees when they are not working, such as on an employee's day off or scheduled vacation. Employees are not expected to respond to any company communication when not at work, which includes unforeseen circumstances, such as an emergency. In the event of an emergency, where the employer reaches out, the employee has the discretion on whether they choose to work.

Staff who do not reply to work-related communications outside regular working hours will not face negative effects on their employment.

5. Breaks and Time Off

Breaks are provided in accordance with employment standards and are intended to provide employees with time to recharge and enable them to work productively during regular working hours. Employees should be clocked in and out of Dayforce appropriately to take any scheduled or company-provided breaks during their shift and use that time to disconnect from work.

The AMS understands the importance for our employees to have personal time off. Employees are encouraged, if applicable, to use their accrued or allotted paid vacation time in full every year. Staff should take the time for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits. Staff will never be obligated to complete work-related activities during scheduled time off.

Knowing that, time management is the responsibility of employees and scheduled time off should not interfere with deadlines. For roles with managerial accountability (e.g., senior managers, executives, and senior permanent staff), it is expected that duties that are to be completed remain covered while the employee is away, out-of-office, or taking time-off. Managers will work with employees to delegate these job-specific duties to maintain workflow and productivity. Employees should not be reluctant to take vacation due to workload, unless there are limitations or restrictions because of a due date, project priority, scheduling conflict, or unforeseen circumstance that prevent an employee from taking a vacation at a specific time. Managers will assist in determining appropriate actions to take to meet deadlines and accommodate time off requests whenever possible. It is, however, still important that staff book their time off in advance, not leaving it to the last minute to request. Last minute requests may be approved on a case-by-case basis, and only if the needs of the department or organization provide ample opportunity.

6. Overtime

At times, the Alma Mater Society of Queen's University may have a business need that requires employees to work overtime. Overtime must always be approved and scheduled in advance. It may be requested by the employee or required in certain situations to ensure work is completed; however, employees should not work overtime unless directed by their manager.

7. Monitoring

Monitoring for compliance with this policy will be carried out by the Direct Report and or Human Resources Office.

Responsibility and/or contact person	Direct Report and Human Resources Office
Approved by	Board of Directors
Date initially approved	June 26, 2022
Date last revised	September 16, 2026
Date of next review	Every two years, or when significant change dictates a need for revision.
Related policies, procedures, and guidelines	N/A
Policies superseded by this policy	N/A