

STATEMENT ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL AND SUPPORT FOR RESERVISTS

1.0 Introduction

This statement sets out how the University of Bolton supports its employees who are reservists in the British Armed Forces and also ex- British Armed Forces personnel. The reserve forces include the Army Reserve, Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marine Reserve and Royal Auxiliary Air Force Reserves.

The University recognises the vital role that the armed forces play, the valuable contribution that reservists make to the national interest and the general community. It also values the transferable skills developed by employees who are reservists – skills that can be of benefit to the University.

The University will assist reservists as far as possible, for example, by taking into account unusual leave requirements or the need to amend working patterns.

2.0 Recruitment of Armed Forces Veterans

As part of the University of Bolton's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and to ensure that ex-armed forces personnel are not disadvantaged as a result of their service, veterans of the armed forces and/or their spouses/civil partners, applying for a job at the University will be guaranteed the offer of an interview, provided that:

- They or their spouse/civil partner are currently serving in the armed forces and are within 12 weeks of their discharge date
- They or their spouse/civil partner were in long-term employment with the armed forces within the last five years
- They meet the essential criteria for the advertised role
- They confirm that they wish any application for a post at the University to be considered under the guaranteed interview scheme.

3.0 Informing the University that you are a Reservist

So that we can support reservists, the organisation asks that new starters who are already reservists or existing staff who become reservists, inform their line manager as soon as possible that they are, or intend to become, reservists. This request is made purely to allow the University to deal with the practical implications of this commitment and provide the appropriate support. Reservists who do so will not be disadvantaged in any way.

4.0 Time Off for Reservist Activities

Professional Support employees who are reservists will be given an additional five days paid discretionary leave. Academic employees who are reservists will be able to use the assigned five discretionary days leave (usually agreed to undertake scholarly activity or research). All other time off requested by reservists would be covered by the employee's annual leave allocation or requested as unpaid leave.

The employee should make the request for leave to their line manager in the normal way as outlined in the Annual Leave Policy. While the University will do its best to accommodate any request to use this additional leave in line with operational needs, line managers cannot guarantee that all requests can be approved. Therefore, to avoid employees being unable to take time off when needed, they should apply for the additional leave as soon as possible if they are informed they need to take time off work, where possible giving a minimum of three months' notice.

This arrangement is only available to employees who are able to provide evidence that they need to take the time off for reservist activities e.g. a letter from their commanding officer. This time cannot be used for days when the employee is not undertaking reservist activities e.g. in order to recover from the physical demands of a weekend away with the reserve forces.

5.0 Flexible Working Requests

The University operates Flexible Working for all employees who have at least 26 weeks service. In line with the guidelines, a request for a change to working hours or pattern of working may be made for a temporary period or on a permanent basis.

Reservists should refer to the University's Guideline for Flexible Working which can be found on the HR A-Z webpages.

6.0 Mobilisation

Reservists may be called out for military operations, with notice typically given 28 days before mobilisation, which can last for up to 12 months.

On being called out, the employee should present their mobilisation papers, ordinarily with a letter from the Ministry of Defence (MoD), to their line manager. This information should outline the date and potential duration of the mobilisation. On occasion the MoD may also contact the organisation independently.

Where mobilisation occurs, the employee will be granted special unpaid leave of absence. Employees will not accrue annual leave during the period.

The University recognises that, under the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985, if it believes that the employee's absence on military service is likely to do 'serious harm' to the business, the University may apply for an exemption, deferral or revocation of mobilisation. The University recognises that the criteria for exemption, deferral or revocation are strict and an application will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

6.1 Pay During Mobilisation

There is no requirements for the University to pay the reservist during his/her absence on military operations. During this period the reservist will receive service pay from the MoD in line with their military rank, along with a standard award to make up any shortfall (up to the statutory limit) between their service pay and normal average weekly earnings.

The University will also continue to pay their contribution to the employee's occupational pension scheme (as long as the employee gives an undertaking to continue paying their own contributions to the scheme during the period of mobilisation).

6.2 Demobilisation

Regardless of the length of military action, the mobilised reservist has the right to be reinstated to their former role with the University within six months of demobilisation, on terms and conditions that are no less favourable than those in place before mobilisation.

If it is not reasonably practicable to reinstate the employee to their former role, the University will re-engage them in the most favourable role that is reasonably practicable in the circumstances.

To exercise the right to be reinstated the reservist must write to the University by no later than the third Monday following demobilisation confirming their intention to return to work within the following 13 weeks. This 13 week period may be renewed for a further 13 weeks if circumstances such as illness or injury prevent the reservists return during the initial period. However, the reservist forfeits their right to return to work with the University if they fail to do so within 26 weeks of demobilisation.

The University will take all reasonable steps to support the reservist's re-integration back into their School/Service.

6.3 Unauthorised Absence

The University will treat any instances of unauthorised leave as a disciplinary matter which could result in disciplinary action, up to and including procedural dismissal.

Employees should be aware that should they take a period of leave that has not been approved, they will be subject to disciplinary action on their return to work.

6.4 Continuity of Employment

The continuity of the reservist's period of employment with the University will not be broken by the period of mobilisation if the employee is reinstated to their former employment within six months of demobilisation.

However, when calculating an employee's total period of continuous employment, the University will discount the number of days falling in the period between the date on which the reservist is called up for military operations and the day immediately preceding the day on which they return to work.

7.0 Support for Line Managers of Reservists

Line managers should speak to their HR Business Partner in the first instance should they have any questions relating to this statement or should they need further information.

8.0 Further Information

Further information can also be obtained from the following websites:

<https://www.gov.uk/employee-reservist/introduction>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide/armed-forces-reserves-a-quick-guide>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/defence-relationship-management>

<https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/896681/200626-EE-Handbook.pdf

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/emp-law/working-time/reservists-questions#gref>

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