

**RCSI**

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## Right to Disconnect Policy

### Purpose

Prioritising the health and wellbeing of our employees has always been of the utmost importance to RCSI and we equally encourage and support our employees to prioritise their wellbeing. In 2018 RCSI introduced the email signature which outlines that there's no expectation for an employee to respond to an email outside of their normal working hours. In addition to supporting this, in 2018, RCSI introduced core working hours and guidance around setting meeting times. To continue to encourage and support RCSI employees in balancing their working and personal lives, whether they work traditional hours in the workplace, work remotely, or flexibly, we have reflected this in our 'Right to Disconnect' policy. To help you achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance, RCSI recognises that every employee is entitled to switch off outside of their normal working hours and enjoy their free time away from work without being disturbed unless there is an emergency or agreement to do so.

This policy also outlines RCSI's commitment to you as an employer, and the responsibilities of all staff to ensure there is a supportive environment, which enables staff to disconnect from the workplace.

### Scope

This policy applies to all RCSI employees regardless of the nature of their contract.

### RCSI's Commitment to you

The Right to Disconnect code of practice mentions that the right to disconnect refers to, *"an employee's right to be able to disengage from work and refrain from in work-related electronic communications, such as emails, telephone calls or messages, outside of normal working hours"*. To continue to encourage a culture where RCSI employees feel they can disconnect from work, it is important to set out that a joint approach from RCSI and its employees is taken and that we recognise we all have obligations to achieve this:

- Provide employees with written information, as part of their Terms of Conditions of Employment, on their working time, in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- Encourage employees to take appropriate time off.
- To ensure a safe workplace, in line with the health and safety legislation, best

practice, and RCSI's Health and Safety Policy and Statement.

We will encourage and support all RCSI employees who act in compliance with this policy and any relevant provision of the health and safety legislation and RCSI's Health and Safety Policy and Statement.

## **What we require from you**

- Ensure you manage your own working time while at work, take reasonable care to protect your safety, health and welfare, and the health and safety of co-workers.
- To ensure effective use of the Core HR System, which RCSI use to record leave & working time, including when working remotely.
- To be mindful of colleagues', customers'/clients', and all others, right to disconnect (e.g., by not routinely emailing or calling outside normal working hours)
- Be conscious of you & your colleagues' work pattern (including periods of leave) and be aware of your work-related wellbeing and take action if necessary.

Naturally, there may, on occasions, be legitimate situations when it is necessary to contact colleagues/ clients/ customers outside of normal working hours to meet the needs of the University, including but not limited to;

- Checking availability for rosters,
- To fill in at short notice for a sick colleague,
- Where unforeseeable circumstances may arise,
- Where an emergency may arise,
- Where business and operational reasons require contact out of normal working hours. (This list is not exhaustive and there may be other situations when it is necessary to contact colleagues outside of normal working hours)

Although everyone should be mindful of the right to disconnect, it is important that we are also mindful that situations can arise where it is not possible to deal with matters during normal working hours. This should be the exception rather than the rule.

## **Role of Line Managers**

As line managers have a close working relationship and are responsible for the oversight of the employees on their team, they must ensure that they cultivate an environment and practice where their team is able to disconnect from work outside of normal working hours. Should an employee have concerns surrounding their working time or feel that they are unable to disconnect from work, this must be brought to the attention of the line manager for them to be aware and try to agree on a resolution.

Line managers, in particular, play a central role in the successful implementation of this policy, and therefore should be mindful of times emails are sent and should they notice that a member of their team is sending emails at unusual hours or are logging in excessively, they should speak to the employee as soon as possible, as this may be an indicator they are finding it difficult to manage their workload during normal working hours.

## **Working Hours**

The bandwidth of the working hours at RCSI is 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday to Friday. These hours do not represent the working day, but rather the breadth of the working day.

Core working hours are either 8:00am – 4:00pm, 9:00am – 5:00pm or 10:00am – 6:00pm. An employee's core working hours are determined by their line manager with consideration for the employee's personal responsibilities and the requirements of the RCSI team unit. All employees have the right to disconnect in the context of their own normal working pattern and should you have any queries regarding this, please speak to your line manager.

## **Communications**

It is important all employee's personal time is respected, and everyone has the right to disconnect from work outside normal working hours. Exceptions may be accommodated for legitimate situations, some of which are outlined above, or for occasional events notified in advance.

Therefore, where possible, e-mails, meeting invitations, and social communications from colleagues etc. should be checked and/or sent only during normal working hours, whilst also appreciating that RCSI operates across different time zones and that where work patterns differ, some employees may send communications at a time which is inconvenient to another i.e., where one employee works during the weekend and another does not. Where this is the case, the sender should consider the timing of their communication and understand that the recipient will not be expected to respond until their return to work.

Where an employee sends communications outside normal working hours, unless business and operational needs dictate that an immediate response is required, employees should not feel the need to respond to communications received outside normal working hours and should not be penalised for refusing to respond outside of their normal working hours.

## **Automatic Replies**

All employees are required to activate an automatic response when taking annual leave to cover the full period of annual leave being taken. The response should advise the sender that you are on annual leave, including the start and end date of the period of annual leave and that you will respond to their email on your return or alternative contact details should be provided in the automatic response.

## **Meeting**

Virtual and face-to-face meetings must not encroach on an employee's right to disconnect. In this regard, all employees should be mindful of the time meetings are scheduled for, ensuring those invited play an active role and have something to contribute to the matters being discussed. In line with RCSI's core working hours outlined above, we ask that no meetings are scheduled between 12 pm and 2 pm where possible. Exceptions may be accommodated for occasional events notified in advance, to support broad engagement from those with roles external to RCSI, or where colleagues mutually agree to meet outside core hours.

## **Electronic & Phone communications**

Some employee's depending on their role may be provided with handheld devices, including but not limited to a mobile phone, laptop or tablet. It is important to be aware that these are provided to employees to allow flexibility in how employees complete their work. This does not imply that the employee makes themselves available for work at all times.

## **Getting Further Help**

Should an employee have any issues in exercising their right to disconnect, they should raise this with their line manager immediately to resolve the issues on an informal basis.

Where the issue is unresolved or an agreement cannot be reached, the matter can be raised with your HR Partner or under the [RCSI's Grievance Procedure](#).

The Human Resources department is available to support any member of staff in understanding or implementing the content of this policy and procedure.

## **Policy Review**

The Human Resources Department will ensure that this policy will be monitored and kept under review.

**RCSI FLEXIBLE WORKING COMMITMENT** aims to encourage new norms so that we can work effectively every day

**RESPECT TIME OUTSIDE WORK**  
Keep emails, texts and meetings to working hours where possible

**ENCOURAGE TIME OUT/OFF**  
Take **daily breaks**  
Keep **lunchtime free** of meetings

**PREVENT MEETING FATIGUE**  
Book **50 minute meetings** and pick up the **phone for quick wins**

**EMBRACE FLEXIBILITY**  
Focus on **outcomes** rather than tasks

**MAINTAIN CONNECTIONS WHILE RESPECTING BOUNDARIES**

Use **cameras** and **don't multi-task** during meetings

Hold **regular team meetings** & frequent **121's**

**Avoid** scheduling **Friday afternoon meetings**

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