



etbi
Education and Training
Boards Ireland
*Boird Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Éireann*

RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

POLICY

*For all staff in
Education and
Training Boards
Ireland*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The health, safety and wellbeing of our staff are of the utmost importance to the management team in the Education, Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). Staff are encouraged and supported to prioritise their own well-being. Disconnecting from work and work devices is vital for your well-being and helps achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance.

ETBI has developed a 'Right to Disconnect' policy, which encourages and supports ETBI staff in balancing their working and personal lives, whether they work standard hours in the workplace, work remotely or are flexible hours.

The right-to-disconnect policy is part of ETBI's commitment to supporting staff well-being and avoiding burnout. This policy aims to provide clear procedures for staff members who wish to present concerns about being overworked.

ETBI recognises that every employee is entitled to switch off outside of normal working hours and enjoy their free time away from work without being disturbed. There may be occasions where contact occurs, including, for example, where business and operational reasons require contact outside of normal working hours and depending on the nature of a staff member's role.

2. STAFF MEMBERS COVERED BY THIS POLICY

The policy is applicable to all staff employed directly by ETBI, through an agency to ETBI and seconded to ETBI.

3. ROLE OF ETBI, STAFF MEMBERS AND LINE MANAGER

All staff members have an active role to play in communication management and the reduction of unnecessary business communications outside normal working hours. ETBI encourages the ongoing cultivation of a culture where our staff members feel they can disconnect from work and work-related devices and this necessitates a joint approach by the General Manager, Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and ETBI staff members.

Some of the respective obligations include:

The role of the ETBI:

- To provide information to staff members on their working time, in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- To ensure a safe workplace, in line with the health and safety legislation.
- To not penalise an employee for acting in compliance with any relevant provision of the health and safety legislation.
- To ensure that staff take their annual leave, rest breaks and rest periods as specified in law/by contract.

The role of the Staff member:

- 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 seek support in doing so if necessary.
- To cooperate fully with any appropriate mechanism utilised by the company to record working time, including when working remotely.
- To respect the working time of colleagues and other contacts (including periods of leave)
- To speak with their line manager if they feel their workload is preventing them from being able to take the rest breaks/lunch/leave they are entitled to.

The role of the line manager:

- Managers, in particular, play a central role in the successful implementation of this policy and may be given additional training and support as needed. Managers also have a duty to respect their team members' right to disconnect and should provide a good example for their team.

4. WORKING HOURS

Your normal working hours are set out in your contract of employment. The standard office hours for full-time staff are 35 hours per week, Monday - Friday. Starting and finishing times are set out in ETBI's Time and Attendance policy. The Time and Attendance policy allows for staff members to fulfil their contract hours between 07:30 am and 18.30 pm, Monday to Friday.

The Time Management System, Zoho People requires staff to check in and check out once a day to record their attendance.

In certain circumstances, staff members may be requested to work additional hours over and above these contracted hours. In these cases, you will be allowed appropriate time off in lieu.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

Electronic & Phone Communications

ETBI respects your personal time and expects you to disconnect from work e-mails and communications outside of 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 only to 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 are not 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 of 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.

Meetings

- While meetings 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 of meetings.
- Avoid scheduling meetings outside of our core hours [9.00am and 4.00pm] or during lunch hours, unless absolutely necessary. Ensure to block out time in your diary to hold time for your breaks.
- 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 post the meeting.

6. STAFF WELLBEING

Staff members, including those engaging in flexible working arrangements or remote working, are reminded to switch off from work and work devices outside their normal working hours and while on leave. Staff members are encouraged to familiarise themselves with their break entitlements as set out in ETBI's Time and Attendance Policy and to ensure that they are availing of these. If an employee is unable to avail of their rest break, they should inform their manager.

Staff members working remotely are encouraged to take steps to create boundaries between work and personal time.

7. REPORTING CONCERNS

Staff members will not be reprimanded for failing to answer phone calls, emails, or messages outside of their normal working hours.

If you encounter problems in availing of your right to disconnect, please speak to your line manager in question in the first instance if you feel comfortable to do so. If you feel that you cannot approach the person directly, then you should approach your Directorate or line manager, HR/IR Governance Officer 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 ETBI's grievance procedure may be utilised.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with ETBI's grievance procedure, ETBI's Sick Leave Policies, ETBI's Equal Opportunities Policy, ETBI's Training & Development Policy, including the PMDS & Supports Policy and ETBI's Data Protection Policy.

We reserve the right to amend and update this policy over time in line with best practices, learnings and any changes in legislation.

8. VARIATION

The policy may be amended at any time following consultation between management and staff.

9. REVIEW OF POLICY

There will be a review of this policy two full years after its introduction or earlier if deemed necessary by ETBI management.