



## RIGHT TO DISCONNECT

## 1.0 Policy Statement

1.1 The health, safety and wellbeing of its employees is of the utmost importance to Mary Immaculate College (MIC), and we encourage and support employees to prioritise their own wellbeing. Disconnecting from work and work devices is vital for wellbeing, and to help achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance.

1.2 The College 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. It also recognises that there may be occasions where contact occurs, including for example where business and operational reasons require contact outside of the employee's normal working hours and depending on the nature of an employee's role. Such occasions may include emergencies, to arrange substitution for unexpected absences or to address other unforeseen events, where colleagues are working in different time zones or where operational needs require out of hours communication.

1.3 To encourage and support employees in balancing their working and personal lives, whether they work standard hours in the workplace, work remotely or flexibly, the College has developed a 'Right to Disconnect' policy, which includes best practice guidance around working hours, the use of technology, and more.

1.4 The College will equality-proof this Policy to ensure it does not disadvantage any employee, including those with caring responsibilities, disabilities, or flexible working arrangements. In applying this Policy, MIC will make reasonable accommodations where required and will ensure that operational practices support equitable access to the right to disconnect for all staff.

1.5 All policies, guidelines, and protocols of MIC will reflect the College's commitment to the promotion of equality in accordance with law.

## 2.0 Scope of Policy

2.1 This policy applies to all employees of Mary Immaculate College.

2.2 For the purposes of this Policy, "normal working hours" are those set out in each employee's contract of employment, terms and conditions of employment, or applicable collective agreement. Normal working hours may vary between roles and categories of staff (e.g., academic, administrative, technical) and may be fixed or flexible depending on operational needs and individual work arrangements. All employees have the same entitlement to disconnect in line with this Policy, regardless of their normal working hours pattern or work

location

### **3.0 Legislation/Other Related Policies**

3.1 Relevant legislation, regulations and codes of practice in relation to this document includes:

- Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997;
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005;
- Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2018;
- Terms of Employment (Information) Acts, 1994 to 2014;
- Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Right to Disconnect.
- MIC Dignity and Respect at Work Policy.
- MIC Blended Working Policy

### **4.0 Responsibilities**

4.1 It is the responsibility of each employee:

- To ensure that they manage their own working time and take care to protect their safety, health, and welfare along with the health and safety of co-workers, in line with health and safety legislation and seek support in doing so where necessary.
- To cooperate fully with any appropriate mechanism utilised by the College to record working time, including when working remotely.
- To respect the working time of colleagues and other contacts (including periods of leave)

4.2 In addition to the responsibilities set out in section 4.1 of this policy, staff who manage other staff have a duty to respect their team members' right to disconnect and should provide a good example for their team.

4.3 It is the responsibility of the College through the College President and Executive Team:

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

### **5.0 Electronic and Telephone Communications**

5.1 The College respects the personal time of staff and expects that staff will

disconnect from work e-mails and work communications outside of normal working hours. It should be noted that staff are not expected to use personal devices such as telephones or tablets for workplace communications and are not expected to have applications required for that purpose, such as Outlook, installed on personal devices.

5.2 Where possible, e-mails should be checked or sent only during normal working hours. However, it is recognised that some employees may have non-standard patterns of work and/or may send communications at times which are opportune for them without any intent to disturb the recipient or in expectation of an immediate response.

5.3 The sender of an out of hours e-mail should give due consideration to the timing of their communication and potential for disturbance, and the recipient should understand that they will not be expected to respond until their working time recommences. Consideration should be given to drafting the e-mail and sending it when normal working hours resume or using the “delay delivery” option in Microsoft Outlook. The tone, context and content of e-mails should always be considered. If it is necessary to send an e-mail out of hours, it is recommended that an appropriate footnote be included such as:

“I am currently working flexibly so while it suits me to send this email now, I do not expect a response or action outside your own working hours”

5.4 Staff should ensure that out-of-office notifications are properly activated for the duration of the period that they are out of the office, that the out-of-office message clearly displays the expected date of the employees return to the office (where this is known) and that it correctly directs the recipient to the appropriate colleague. Staff should respect out-of-office notifications when received from others.

5.5 Where a manager sends communications outside normal working hours, unless operational needs dictate that an immediate response is required, a statement will be attached to an out of hours email tempering the expectation of an immediate response.

5.6 Managers should speak to a team member if they notice that they are sending emails outside of normal and/or agreed working hours and/or logging in excessively – this may be a sign that they are finding it difficult to manage their workload within their working hours or to ‘switch-off’.

## **6.0 Meetings**

6.1 Individual teams and managers are encouraged to review the frequency and timing of meetings they hold to ensure optimum use of time and to

allow colleagues time to work outside of meetings. Meetings should not be scheduled outside of core hours or during lunch hours, unless absolutely necessary. Respect for colleagues' time should be demonstrated by only inviting them to meetings where their presence is necessary.

## **7.0 Wellbeing**

7.1 Employees are reminded to switch off from work and work devices outside their normal working hours, and while on periods of leave. Employees working from home are encouraged to take steps to create boundaries between work and personal time. Staff must take reasonable care of their health and safety in accordance with Section 13 of the Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (SHWWA 2005).

7.2 Employees are encouraged to monitor their working hours and to take breaks in accordance with legislation. By law all employees are entitled to a 15-minute break when they have worked for 4 ½ hours, and a 30 minute break, which can include the first 15 minute break, when they have worked for more than 6 hours. Employees are also entitled to 11 hours daily rest and, 24 hours weekly rest. If an employee is unable to avail of these breaks they should inform their line manager.

## **8.0 Reporting Concerns**

8.1 Employees will not be reprimanded for not answering phone calls, emails, or messages outside of their normal working hours.

8.2 Any employee who has trouble in availing of their right to disconnect should speak to the person(s) in question in the first instance if they feel comfortable to do so. If they do not feel that they can approach the person directly, then they should seek the assistance of their line manager, another line manager, or a member of HR, 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 grievance procedure may be utilised. Staff who are members of a recognised trade union may wish to seek advice from their Union representative.

## **9.0 Training**

9.1 MIC will support the implementation of this policy through the provision of appropriate training, including training on the right to disconnect and time management.

## **10.0 Audit and Review**

10.1 The implementation of this policy will be subject to periodic evaluation

which will include consultation with staff representative bodies.

10.2 This Policy will be reviewed three years from the date of its adoption by *An tÚdarás Rialaithe* or earlier if required by a change in legislation. The Director of Human Resources will initiate the review.

| Revision | Document History                   | Reviewed By ET | Approved By UR |
|----------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 0        | Initial Release                    | October 2025   | UR2026#01      |
| 1        | Review scheduled every three years |                |                |
|          |                                    |                |                |