

Employee Vacation Leave – Best Practice Guidance for Supervisors

Vacation Leave Policy: Iowa State University's [policy](#) states that specific vacation days are to be established in conjunction with the chair or director of the department. In no case may an employee be granted vacation in excess of the amount earned by the employee. There is no minimum employment duration that employees must pass in order to request accrued vacation leave.

An employing department may require employees to take vacation leave whenever, in its judgment, such action will be in the interests of the department. The employing department shall consult with Employee and Labor Relations or their respective vice president or dean prior to requiring the use of vacation leave.

Authorization and Approval: Managers and supervisors are responsible for balancing workload, staffing levels, and budget. Therefore, management has the discretion to determine if vacation will be approved. Managers and supervisors should consider vacation leave, sick leave and other kinds of employee absences when planning staffing levels. Staff members may not authorize or certify their own vacation requests or leave *and* must seek approval from their manager prior to using vacation leave.

Best Practice Recommendations

- Although managers and supervisors must consider operational needs when approving or denying vacation leave, they are encouraged to be as flexible as possible in accommodating an employee's request to use accrued vacation leave.
- Discuss your employee vacation practices during the hiring and onboarding process and provide employees with any written work unit procedures. Highlight the peak work periods during which vacations may be prohibited or restricted. If there are any conflicts with regard to leave requests during or around university holidays or prior commitments, discuss them at that time to prevent surprises later on.
- Supervisors should anticipate and plan for how disputes will be resolved around times of high-demand vacation requests.
- Units shall set parameters for requesting and approving leave. This includes setting a reasonable request deadline and approval process to provide enough time to project how employee absences may impact the needs of the work unit. For example, an employee should request the use of leave at least one week in advance of the date they wish to take off in order for the manager to have adequate time to evaluate staffing levels and ensure appropriate coverage. The process for requesting and approving vacation leave should be clearly communicated to employees. Furthermore, leave authorization and usage should be fair and consistent.
- It is not required to approve or deny vacation leave based on seniority or within specified timeframes, however, a consistent process should be implemented within work units.
- Employees are responsible for managing their leave balances to ensure they have enough leave to cover their absence. Managers are additionally responsible for monitoring employee's leave balances when reviewing the leave usage reported to them by the employee. Actively monitoring vacation approvals and usage should help prevent abuse, inconsistent treatment and help settle disputes between employees and managers.
- Unauthorized usage of vacation leave may result in disciplinary action. Please consult with

your department or unit's Human Resource Liaison or University Human Resource Employee and Labor Relations for guidance if this occurs.

Vacation Leave Usage and Overtime: The use of paid and unpaid leave time such as holiday, sick and vacation leave is not considered work time and therefore is excluded from the weekly total of time worked for purposes of calculating overtime.

Additional Resources

[ISU Vacation Leave Policy](#)

[ISU Leave of Absence without Pay Policy](#)

[ISU Office Hours Policy](#)

[ISU Leave Paid or Unpaid](#)

[Merit Employee Guide to Hours Worked and Leave Due to Chapter 20 Changes](#)