Valdosta State University

CLASSIFIED STAFF HANDBOOK

Revised September 2026

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SECTION:

HANDBOOK ADMINISTRATION

About this Handbook

*For additional information on any of the policies and procedures contained herein, please visit the **Human Resources & Employee and Organizational Development (HR/EOD)** section of the Valdosta State University website.*

Revised September 2026

Policy Updates, Changes, and/or Revisions to Personnel Handbook

Welcome to Valdosta State University. Whether you are joining us as a faculty member, staff member, administrator, or student employee, you are an important part of the Blazer community. Your knowledge, talents, and commitment help advance our mission of excellence in teaching, research, scholarship, service, and student success.

We are excited to have you as part of our team and hope your experience at VSU is both professionally rewarding and personally fulfilling. Together, we will continue building a culture of excellence, innovation, collaboration, and respect while making a meaningful difference in the lives of our students and the communities we serve.

We wish you every success and look forward to the contributions you will make as a member of the Valdosta State University family.

Relationship to USG and University policies

This handbook is intended to serve as a general guide to employment at Valdosta State University. It does not create, and should not be interpreted as creating, a contract of employment or any contractual rights or obligations between Valdosta State University and any employee, whether individually or collectively. Rather, the policies, procedures, practices, and benefits described herein are provided as general administrative guidelines to support consistent and effective employment practices.

Because laws, regulations, Board of Regents policies, and institutional needs evolve over time, this handbook is not intended to address every situation or circumstance. Valdosta State University reserves the right to modify, revise, suspend, interpret, or discontinue any policy, procedure, practice, or benefit described in this handbook at any time, with or without notice, to the extent permitted by law.

Unless otherwise noted, the policies contained in this handbook apply to both faculty and staff. Matters that are unique to faculty employment, including those related to academic responsibilities, promotion, tenure, and faculty governance, are addressed in the Faculty Handbook and other applicable Board of Regents and University policies.

This handbook is subject to all applicable policies of the University System of Georgia Board of Regents. In the event of any conflict between this handbook and Board of Regents policies, rules, or procedures, the Board of Regents' policies shall govern and take precedence.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for reviewing this handbook and any updates provided by the University. Failure to read or acknowledge a policy does not relieve an employee of the responsibility to comply with applicable requirements.

Employees are responsible for understanding and complying with the policies, procedures, and workplace expectations applicable to their positions. Employees are also responsible for keeping their personal and employment information current, completing required training, accurately reporting work and leave, and promptly raising questions or concerns through the appropriate University channels.

SECTION:

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION & RECORDS

Employee Records

Reference: HRAP 03.08 Employee Personnel Records (usg.edu)

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Employees have the right to review their personnel records with HR/EOD.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Current Employees**
   - Plan ahead: Submit your request at least three (3) days before you need access.
   - Complete the Personnel File Request Form here.
   - Submit the form via email: Send it from your VSU email address to hrstaff@valdosta.edu.
   - Submit the form in person: Please bring a completed request form along with a valid driver's license or other government-issued photo ID.
   - Receive your file: Your personnel file will be sent in electronic format to your VSU email.
   - Contest inaccuracies:
     - If you believe any information is inaccurate, submit supporting documentation in writing to hrstaff@valdosta.edu.
2. **Former Employees**
   - Must submit an open records request.
   - Contact Legal Affairs via email at openrecords@valdosta.edu for guidance and submission.

Name and Personal Information Changes

Reference: VSU HR FAQs

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Employees are responsible for making changes to personal information using the Employee Self Service HR/EOD/Payroll system. Name changes will require submission of the required original supporting documentation (Social Security card, marriage certificate, etc.) to be presented to HR/EOD.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Obtain Legal Documentation**
   - Ensure you have official legal documentation of your name change (e.g., court order, marriage certificate, or other legal proof). Name change must be completed at the Social Security Administration Office first.
2. **Submit Request**
   - Submit a name change request through OneUSG.
3. **Present Documentation to HR/EOD**
   - Provide the original legal documentation to HR/EOD for verification.
4. **Remote employees will complete the following in addition to the steps above:**
   - Submit documents through a secure platform.
   - Attend a virtual meeting where documents will be reviewed in real-time with an HR/EOD representative.
5. **Incomplete Requests**
   - HR/EOD must have the required documentation in order to process the name change request.
   - Ensure all documentation is complete to avoid delays.

Employee Service Date

Reference: BOR Policy 8.2.07.01/VSU HRAPM Policy

POLICY AT A GLANCE: An employee's service date is the date of your initial employment with the University System of Georgia unless there has been a 30-day break in service by termination of employment. Moving from one type of position to another (full-time to part-time or temporary to regular) may impact your service dates.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Identify the Need**
   - Determine if you believe your service date is incorrect or if you need confirmation of your service date.
2. **Contact HR/EOD**
   - You may choose one of two methods:
     - Schedule an Appointment
       - Meet with the Benefits team in HR/EOD.
       - Bring a valid form of identification.
   - Submit a Written Request
     - Send a request via your VSU email account to vsubenefits@valdosta.edu.
     - Include relevant details to help HR/EOD locate and verify your service date.
3. **Follow Up**
   - HR/EOD will review your records and provide confirmation or corrections as needed.
   - Maintain documentation of any communication or confirmation for your records.

Student Rights to Educational Records and Privacy, FERPA

Reference: VSU FERPA/USG Policy 03.02 Student Privacy

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The purpose of this policy is to define Directory Information as it pertains to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and outline the rights of students regarding the disclosure of such information by institutions within the University System of Georgia (USG). The policy ensures compliance with FERPA while balancing the need for transparency and the protection of student privacy.

PROCEDURES:

Before disclosing student information:

1. **Confirm the Need for Disclosure**
   - Review the request for student information.
   - Determine if it falls under a FERPA-approved exception.
2. **Allowable Disclosures Without Consent**
   Employees may disclose records only to the following parties, when appropriate:
   - School officials with a legitimate educational interest.
   - Other schools where the student seeks or intends to enroll.
   - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes.
   - Appropriate parties related to student financial aid.
   - Organizations conducting studies on behalf of the institution.
   - Accrediting organizations.
   - Judicial or subpoena requests, if legally binding.
   - Health and safety officials in an emergency.
3. **Verify Legitimacy**
   - Confirm the identity of the requesting party.
   - Ensure the purpose aligns with FERPA allowances.
   - Seek guidance from your institution's Registrar or Legal Affairs if unsure.
4. **Document the Disclosure**
   - Record what was disclosed, to whom, the date, and the reason.
   - Keep documentation with the student's education record when required.
5. **Protect Confidentiality**
   - Do not share records with unauthorized individuals.
   - Do not discuss student information in public spaces or casual conversations.
   - Use secure methods (encrypted email, secure portals) for transmitting records.
6. **General Reminders**
   - When in doubt, **do not release information without confirmation** from the Registrar or Legal Affairs.
   - Always follow institutional policies and FERPA guidelines.
   - Always protect the privacy and integrity of student education records.

SECTION:

EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

New Hire Policy

Reference: HRAP 03.16 Criteria for Employment

POLICY AT A GLANCE: All new employees must meet the qualificators for the job and terms and conditions of employment.

- Employees must successfully complete a background check and credit check, if applicable.
- Complete and sign the Security Questionnaire and Loyalty Oath.
- File Federal and Georgia tax withholding forms, (unless fully remote position).
- Enroll in a USG retirement program or the Georgia Defined Contribution Plan as required based on employment status.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Complete Required Forms**
   - Employees must complete the Security Questionnaire.
   - Employee must complete the I-9 Form within three (3) days of hire.
   - Work cannot begin until these forms are completed and submitted, and a confirmation email is received.
2. **If You Cannot Complete Forms on Time**
   - Contact HR/EOD immediately to discuss the situation and next steps.
3. **Questions About Tax Forms**
   - If you have questions regarding tax forms (W-4, state forms, etc.) contact a tax professional for guidance.
4. **Questions About Benefits**
   - If you have questions regarding benefits, contact the VSU Benefits team or visit the OneUSG Benefits Call Center at (844) 587-4236 for assistance.

Orientation and New Hire Compliance Training

Reference: HRAP 03.07 Employee Orientation

POLICY AT A GLANCE: All new employees are responsible for reading and being familiar with policies and procedures of the Board of Regents (BOR), the University System of Georgia (USG), and the employee's institution. All new, regular, and temporary employees are introduced to Valdosta State University through a general orientation conducted by HR/EOD.

PROCEDURES:

1. **ID Card and Parking Permit**
   - At the onboarding appointment, all new employees receive an authorization form for:
     - Parking permit
     - I.D. Card
     - Lost I.D. Card - Employees are responsible for the cost of replacement.
   - Contact Information:
     - Parking & Transportation (229) 293-7275
     - 1Card Services (229) 259-2593
2. **New Hire Compliance Training**
   - All employees must complete required compliance training within 30 days of hire.
   - If you cannot log in to access training, contact training@valdosta.edu.
3. **Orientation Session**
   - All employees must complete an Orientation Session.
   - If you do not receive notification to attend Orientation, contact training@valdosta.edu.
   - If you cannot attend the scheduled session, contact HR/EOD immediately. HR/EOD will provide the next available date.
   - Inform your supervisor of the new Orientation date to ensure their awareness.
4. **Remote employees and Summer-ONLY hires**
   - Will complete an online version of the training.
   - They will be automatically enrolled in BlazeVIEW.

Required Training and Annual Compliance

Reference: Mandatory Trainings usg.edu)

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The University System of Georgia (USG) is committed to upholding the highest ethical standards and conducting our operations honestly, honorably and legally. Therefore, all employees will complete the required training.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Completion of Training**
   - Supervisors are responsible for ensuring all new employees must complete required training.
2. **Access Issues**
   - If you do not have access to training upon hire, contact training@valdosta.edu.
3. **Failure to Complete Training**
   - Employees who fail to complete required training will be:
     - Notified that they are out of compliance.
     - Reminded to complete the training promptly.
     - Subject to revoked access to email and/or institutional technology until training is completed.
     - At risk of termination from employment if training is not completed.
4. **Additional and Ongoing Training**
   - Cybersecurity Awareness Training is required in April and October annually.
   - Annual Refresher Training is conducted in October/November for all active employees.
   - Additional compliance certifications may be required based on job duties, such as:
     - Clery Act
     - Budget management
     - Defensive driving
     - ePro system
     - PCI compliance
5. **Notifications and Updates**
   - Employees will be notified of all additional compliance and training requirements.
   - Supervisors should monitor completion to ensure employees remain in compliance with all institutional and regulatory training mandates.

Provisional Period

Reference: HRAP 03.18 - Provisional Appointments

POLICY AT A GLANCE: All employees are subject to a six-month provisional period. Public Safety employees will begin their provisional period after completion of mandated training. Employees will be automatically released from provisional to regular employment at the completion of 6 months if HR/EOD is not notified of any issues.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Setting Expectations**
   - During the provisional period, supervisors should:
     - Clearly communicate job expectations to the new hire.
     - Monitor performance regularly.
     - Provide feedback and guidance to support development and success.
2. **Monitoring and Documentation**
   - Supervisors must retain documentation regarding the new hire's performance within 6 months (180 days).
   - Notification should include:
     - Assessment of job performance
     - Any recommendations for continued employment
   - Supervisors must contact HR/EOD before the end of the provisional period if additional time is needed to complete the employee's orientation or if the employee will not be released to regular employment.
3. **Automatic Release**
   - If HR/EOD does not receive written notification from the supervisor within 180 days:
     - The new hire will be automatically released from provisional status to regular employment.
4. **Extension of Provisional Period**
   - Supervisors may extend the provisional period once for up to 90 additional days if more time is needed to assess performance.
   - The extension must be documented and communicated to HR/EOD prior to the end of the original 180-day period.
5. **General Reminders**
   - Provide coaching and feedback throughout the provisional period and address performance issues as they arise.
   - Document all feedback, performance discussions, and corrective actions.
   - Ensure HR/EOD is kept informed to avoid automatic transitions or compliance issues.

Employee Categories

Reference: HRAP 02.06 Employee Categories

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Employee categories (types of employees and types of employment) have been established to identify persons who are employed by the USG. The types of employees and types of employment are used to determine benefits eligibility and applicability of Board of Regents (BOR) policy, as well as ensure accuracy in reporting based on employee and employment type.

PROCEDURES:

1. **If You Are Unsure of Your Classification**
    - Review your offer letter or employment agreement.
    - Contact the Office of HR/EOD for clarification or assistance.
    - Keep a record of your classification, benefits eligibility, and contract terms for your reference.

Review the applicable policy in this handbook for additional information on exempt vs. non-exempt requirements.

Employment of Relatives

Reference: HRAP 03.12 - Employment of Relatives (usg.edu)

POLICY AT A GLANCE: This policy ensures a fair and measured approach to employment of relatives and avoids conflicts that can arise from nepotism. Definitions per the policy: Nepotism: The showing of favoritism toward relatives and friends, based upon that relationship, rather than on an objective evaluation of ability, meritocracy or suitability. Although "relative" is defined as a spouse, parent, child, sibling, or related in-law, favoritism based on any personal relationship is strictly prohibited.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Understand the Policy**
   - Employment relationships by family or marriage shall not provide advantages or disadvantages.
   - No employee may hold a position that creates a subordinate-superior relationship with a relative.
   - Review the Board of Regents Policy Manual for full details.
2. **Employment Restrictions**
   - Employees cannot work in a department or unit where a relative is in a supervisory role over them, through any line of authority.
   - This restriction applies to all positions, except:
     - Temporary or part-time employment of children under age 25.
     - Employees hired before February 14, 1990, under certain conditions.
3. **Seeking Exceptions**
   - Any exception must be:
     - Recommended by the Chancellor.
     - Approved by the Board of Regents.
     - Demonstrated as being clearly in the best interest of the institution and University System.
4. **Reporting and Disclosure**
   - Employees must disclose familial relationships that could create a conflict of interest.
   - Supervisors and HR/EOD must ensure compliance before hiring or assigning positions.
5. **Monitoring and Compliance**
   - HR/EOD reviews department staffing to ensure no subordinate-superior relationship exists between relatives.
   - Any potential conflicts identified must be resolved prior to assignment.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Reference: BOR Policy 06.06 - Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment
HRAP 04.09 - Discrimination & Harassment

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Valdosta State University is committed to maintaining a fair and respectful environment for living, working and studying. To that end, and in accordance with federal and state law, Board of Regents' policy, and University policy, the University prohibits any member of the faculty, staff, administration, or student body from discriminating against any other member of the University community because of that person's race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic or national origin, religion, age, disabled status, or status as a disabled veteran.

PROCEDURES:

When receiving reports of discrimination:

1. Do not promise confidentiality.
2. In situations where you have redirected an employee to speak to HR/EOD, you should follow up with HR/EOD to ensure the employee has followed through.

As a general rule:

1. Notify VSU's HR/EOD immediately if you believe that you are a victim or have been made aware of or received a complaint of:
   - Discrimination
   - Harassment
   - Hostile environment
   - Retaliation
   - Sexual Harassment/Misconduct
   - Threats of violence

Americans with Disabilities Act

Reference: HRAP 03.02 Americans with Disabilities Act

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Valdosta State University is governed by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, which specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Valdosta State University is committed to complying with the goals and objectives of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Identification or Disclosure**
   - Self-disclose a disability to HR/EOD.
     - Disclosure can be voluntary but is required to begin the accommodation process.
   - A potential disability is observed by a supervisor and reported to HR/EOD.

2. **Initial HR/EOD Consultation**
   - HR/EOD will meet with the employee to:
     - Explain applicable benefits and rights (e.g., FMLA, ADA).
     - Provide guidance on ADA rights and the accommodation process.
     - Supply ADA request form if needed.
3. **Completion of ADA Request Form**
   - Employees complete the ADA request form, in partnership with their physician.
   - Submit the completed form to HR/EOD with any supporting documentation.
4. **HR/EOD Review and Interactive Session includes:**
   - a review of submitted documentation.
   - an interactive session with the employee to review any possible accommodation.
   - development of the preliminary plan of action or support based on recommendations from the employee's treating physician.
5. **Supervisor Consultation**
   - HR/EOD meets with the employee's immediate supervisor to ensure the proposed accommodation is reasonable and does not interfere with essential job functions.
6. **Discussion with Employee**
   - HR/EOD communicates with the employee to provide the approved accommodation plan.
   - Adjustments may be made as needed based on feedback and operational requirements.
7. **Implementation**
   - The agreed-upon accommodation is implemented in the workplace.
   - The institution monitors and follows up as necessary to ensure effectiveness.

Tobacco and Smoke Free Campus

Reference: BOR Policy 6.10 Tobacco and Smoke-Free Campuses (usg.edu)
Tobacco and smoke free campus (valdosta.edu)

POLICY AT A GLANCE: In accordance with the Georgia Smoke Free Air Act of 2005, Title 31 Chapter 12A, this policy reinforces the USG commitment to provide a safe and amicable workplace for all employees. The goal of the policy is to preserve and improve the health, comfort and environment of students, employees and any persons occupying our campus.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Familiarize Yourself with the Policy**
   - Understand that all tobacco products are prohibited on property owned, leased, rented, or used by USG or its affiliates.
   - Tobacco products include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, all forms of smokeless tobacco, clove cigarettes, hookahs, and electronic cigarettes or other devices that simulate tobacco use.
2. **Communication Responsibilities**
   - If you are in a position of authority, ensure that the policy is clearly communicated to all students, staff, and visitors.
   - Use tools such as emails, newsletters, or campus bulletins to notify the campus community of updates or reminders.
3. **Support for Quitting**
   - If you use tobacco and want to quit, utilize campus cessation programs, counseling, and resources.
   - Participate in available wellness initiatives to support a smoke-free lifestyle.
4. **Addressing Policy Violations**
   - Politely inform anyone using tobacco on campus about the policy.
   - If direct communication is uncomfortable or ineffective, notify the appropriate authority (e.g., campus security or student affairs).
5. **Reporting Violations**
   - Report observed violations to campus security or the designated authority following the policy instructions.
   - Use confidential reporting systems where available to ensure safety and compliance.

Drug Free Workplace

Reference: HRAP 05.01 Drug Testing Safety & Security (usg.edu)/drug-and-alcohol-testing.pdf (valdosta.edu)

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Valdosta State University, as a recipient of federal funds, supports and complies with the provisions of the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988. As an employer, Valdosta State University will aggressively promote and strive to maintain a drug-free workplace for its faculty and staff.

Reasons for Testing

- **Pre-employment**
- **Post-accident testing**
- **Reasonable suspicion testing**
- **Random testing**

NOTE: All testing is administered through VSU's third-party vendor, The Airport Clinic, Inc. Standard testing will be conducted using urine specimen collection. When circumstances warrant the use of an alternative authorized collection method, the employee's written consent will be obtained prior to collection. Any alternative collection method will be administered in accordance with applicable state and federal laws and University System of Georgia (USG) policies.

PROCEDURES:

1. **General Compliance**
   - Do not unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, or use illegal drugs while employed at Valdosta State University.
   - Understand that violations may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or termination.
2. **Reporting Requirements**
   - If convicted of a misdemeanor or felony drug-related offense during employment:
     - Report the conviction to HR/EOD within 24 hours.
   - HR/EOD is required to notify federal funding agencies when applicable.
3. **Prescription Medications**
   - If you are legally prescribed medication that may affect your ability to perform your job safely and effectively:
     - Disclose this information confidentially to HR/EOD (or through designated channels such as Occupational Health or the Employee Relations office).
     - Provide documentation if requested.
     - Do not share prescription medication with others under any circumstances.
4. **Disclosure Expectations**
   - Employees must immediately inform HR/EOD if they are:
     - taking any prescription or over-the-counter medication that may affect their ability to safely and effectively perform their job duties.
     - convicted of a drug-related misdemeanor or felony during their employment.
     - experiencing a substance abuse-related issue that may affect their ability to perform their job duties.

- receiving, or have agreed to receive, treatment through a drug abuse education or treatment program approved by the President of the institution or their designee.

All disclosures will be handled confidentially and in compliance with applicable laws.

NOTE: Shall not apply when an employee subject to random drug screening has been selected to report for random drug screening.

5. Maintaining a Drug Free Workplace

- Participate in required drug-free workplace awareness training.
- Cooperate with institutional efforts to promote health, safety, and compliance with the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988.
- Be aware that refusal to comply with drug-free workplace policies may lead to disciplinary action.

Telework

Reference: telework policy (valdosta.edu)/
HRAP 03.22 Teleworking/Flextime Policy

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The University System of Georgia allows teleworking and flextime, on a voluntary basis, to employees who fill job classifications/positions that have been designated as eligible for telework and/or flextime. Telework is an employer option, not an employee right, and is appropriate only when it results in a benefit to the institution.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Discuss with Supervisor**
   - Talk with your supervisor about whether teleworking is appropriate for your position and work responsibilities.
2. **Complete Required Forms**
   - Fill out the Telework Assessment.
   - Complete the Workspace Self-Certification Checklist.
3. **Complete Required Training**
   - Take Telework training in Percipio.
   - Ensure your supervisor also completes the training.
4. **Submit Agreement**
   - Work with your supervisor to complete the Telework Agreement and submit it for approval.
5. **Begin Telework Once Approved**
   - You may only start teleworking after your agreement has been approved.
6. **Maintain Eligibility**
   - Adhere to all telework requirements, including performance standards, IT policies, and workplace conduct expectations.
7. **Annual Review**
   - Expect your Telework Agreement to be reviewed annually (each calendar year or when a new agreement begins).
8. **Discontinuation of Agreement**
   - When practicable, an employee should receive written notice at least 14 calendar days before a regular telework arrangement is discontinued or materially revised.
   - A shorter notice period, including immediate revocation, may be used when warranted by operational needs, performance or conduct concerns, information-security risks, safety concerns, policy violations, or other circumstances requiring the employee's prompt return.

Employee Travel

Reference: USG BPM 4.0 Travel Authorizations

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidelines to state agencies for payment of travel expenses in an efficient, cost-effective manner, and to enable state travelers to successfully execute their travel requirements at the lowest reasonable costs, resulting in the best value for the State. Teleconferencing instead of travel should be considered when possible.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Before Travel**
   - Complete Request for Travel form before the trip.
   - Obtain approval from the appropriate personnel (your supervisor and budget manager).
   - Wait for confirmation before making travel arrangements.
2. **During Travel**
   - Keep all receipts for reasonable and necessary business expenses (lodging, transportation, meals, etc.).
   - Follow university travel guidelines for allowable expenses.
   - Document trip details such as dates, times, and purpose of meetings or events.
3. **After Travel**
   - Complete a Travel Expense Statement electronically in PeopleSoft.
   - Attach required receipts and any supporting documentation.
   - Verify accuracy of expense categories before submission.
4. **Approval Process**
   - Submitted expenses are routed to your budget manager for review.
   - After approval, the request goes to Financial Services for processing.
5. **Deadlines**
   - Submit all travel requests and expense statements within 60 days of completing travel.
   - Late submissions may not be reimbursed.
6. **General Reminders**
   - Double-check that all forms are signed and dated.
   - Keep copies of forms and receipts for your records.
   - Contact Financial Services if you have questions about allowable expenses.

For links to forms, job aids, etc. visit VSU Travel
Questions: Contact the Travel Office at travel@valdosta.edu

SECTION:

BENEFITS AND LEAVE POLICIES

Annual Leave

Reference: BOR Policy 8.02.07.01 Vacation/Annual Leave/Time and Absence Job Aids

POLICY AT A GLANCE: All regular employees working at least one-half-time and 12-month faculty will receive paid vacation as noted below.

- Years 1-5: 10 hours per month
- Years 6-10: 12 hours per month
- Years 10+: 14 hours per month
- 12-month Faculty and Administrative Officer and above: 14 hours per month

At the end of each calendar year, the leave record for each employee will be adjusted to ensure that no more than 360 hours of accrued annual leave is carried over into the next year.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Requesting Leave**
   - Submit your leave request through the HR/EOD/Payroll system of record.
   - Allow sufficient time for your supervisor to review and approve.
2. **Scheduling Leave**
   - Be mindful of departmental peak periods when leave may be limited.
   - If multiple employees request the same time off, priority goes to the employee with longer service.
3. **Emergency Leave**
   - If leave is needed unexpectedly, immediately notify your supervisor and submit the request in the HR/EOD/Payroll system.
4. **Leave Approval or Denial**
   - Supervisors may approve or deny requests based on departmental needs.
   - Denied or canceled requests must be updated in the HR/EOD/Payroll system.
5. **Leave Balance**
   - Do not request more annual leave than you have accrued. Doing so will result in unpaid status.
6. **Vacation Pay Out at Termination**
   - Upon separation, you will be paid for accrued annual leave up to a maximum of 360 hours.
7. **Leave Transfer Between Institutions**
   - If transferring within USG without a break in service, you must transfer up to 160 hours of annual leave.
   - If you have more than 160 hours, you may either:
     - Transfer the total balance up to 360 hours, or
     - Be paid out for the portion above 160 hours (not to exceed 200 hours).

Vacation or annual leave should be scheduled with supervisor's approval. Institutions may require up to five mandatory leave days when facilities are closed, and classes are not offered. Employees must request these days as leave; if they lack sufficient leave hours, the time will be unpaid.

Sick Leave

Reference: BOR Policy 8.02.07.02 Sick Leave with Pay/Time and Absence Job Aids

POLICY AT A GLANCE: For all regular full-time employees of the USG, sick leave shall accrue 8 hours per calendar month of service. Sick leave may be granted at the discretion of the institution and upon approval by the supervisor for an employee's absence for any of the following reasons:

- Illness or injury of the employee.
- Medical and dental treatment or consultation.
- Quarantine due to a contagious illness in the employee's household.
- Illness or injury in the employee's immediate family requiring the employee's presence; or
    - Bereavement, an employee may use accrued sick leave for any absence due to a death in the employee's immediate family (i.e. spouse, parent or stepparent, child (including unborn) or stepchild, brother or sister, grandparent, grandchild, parent-in-law, son- or daughter-in-law, brother- or sister-in-law, or any individual who permanently resides in the employee's household).

PROCEDURES:

1. **Submit a Sick Leave Request**
    - Enter your request in the system of record (e.g., OneUSG).
2. **If Using Leave for Illness for More than Three Consecutive Days**
    - Provide a physician's statement or other appropriate documentation to continue using sick leave.
    - Contact HR/EOD to start the FMLA process.
    - If your absence qualifies for FMLA, your paid sick leave will run concurrently with FMLA.
3. **Transferring Sick Leave**
    - If moving to another USG position with no break in service, your sick leave balance transfers automatically.
    - If transferring from a State of Georgia agency (with no more than a 30-day break), you may transfer up to 96 hours of sick leave.
    - Provide written verification of your leave balance from the agency you are leaving.
4. **Canceling or Denying Sick Leave Requests**
    - Any cancellation or denial of a leave request must be completed through the system of record (e.g., OneUSG).
5. **If You Lack Enough Sick Leave**
    - The system will automatically check other available leave balances in a set order as outlined below and apply them to cover your absence.
6. **Cascading Order of Leave**
    - The system will automatically check other leave balances in this order:
        - Sick
        - Comp Time
        - Deferred Holiday
        - Annual Leave
        - Unscheduled Holiday

      If you are not eligible for the next leave type, the system will continue checking until an eligible type is applied. If none are available, leave without pay will be required.

Sick Leave Without Pay

Reference: BOR Policy 8.02.07.03 Sick Leave Without Pay/Time and Absence Job Aids

POLICY AT A GLANCE: An employee unable to return to work after using up all accumulated sick and vacation leave may be granted leave without pay for a period not to exceed one year upon approval by the Director/Dean and Vice President. An employee is allowed to continue his/her insurance benefits with System participation in the premium cost.

PROCEDURES:

Leave Without Pay: We strongly encourage employees to communicate with their supervisor when there is a need to utilize leave without pay.

1. **Submit a Request**
   - Submit a single written request to HR/EOD with your supervisor copied, requesting leave without pay.
2. **Approval Process**
   - HR/EOD will evaluate the request against applicable federal, state, or other leave policies.
   - If no federal or state leaves apply, HR/EOD will facilitate the request for a personal leave of absence pending department approval.
     - If approved, HR/EOD will provide an approval notice with information regarding benefits continuation and update the system of record (e.g., OneUSG).
     - If denied, HR/EOD will provide denial notice.
3. **Insurance Coverage During Leave**
   - If approved, you may choose to keep your insurance benefits active. During this period:
     - The institution will continue paying its share of the premiums.
     - You are responsible for paying your share of the premiums.
4. **Accrual of Leave While Unpaid**
   - During an unpaid leave status, you will not accrue vacation or sick leave.
5. **Canceling a Leave Request**
   - Employees must notify their supervisor and HR/EOD in writing to cancel a leave request.

Other Leave Without Pay: In these situations, leave is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. We strongly encourage employees to communicate with their supervisor when there is a need to utilize leave without pay.

Shared Sick Leave

Reference: Shared Sick Leave Pool Membership Form
Shared Sick Leave Pool Request Form
Physician's Certification Form
HRAP 06.14 Shared Sick Leave Program

POLICY AT A GLANCE: University System of Georgia (USG) institutions are authorized to establish policies through which employees may voluntarily donate unused sick leave to a pool for possible use by another institutional employee who is experiencing a serious health condition or whose immediate family member is experiencing a serious health condition and who has used all of their accumulated paid leave. The Shared Sick Leave Program provides a means for USG employees to donate paid sick leave to a shared leave pool and for fellow employees who meet the eligibility requirements to request leave from the pool.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Leave Usage**
   - You may request up to 160 hours of Shared Leave at one time.
   - You may make up to two additional requests in the same calendar year, for a total of three requests.
   - The maximum is 480 hours per calendar year.
2. **Donating Leave**
   - You must keep at least 40 hours of your own sick leave balance.
   - You may donate up to 80-hours of sick leave in 8-hour increments.
   - Enrollments may only be made during the Annual Open Enrollment period for the following calendar year.
   - Donations are not reversible or refundable.
3. **Requesting Shared Leave**
   - Complete the Shared Sick Leave Pool Request Form.
   - Must be a member of the shared sick leave program.
   - Obtain a Physician's Certification Form completed by your doctor.
   - Submit both forms to HR/EOD.
4. **Notification of Decision**
   - You will be notified within 10 working days of approval or denial.
     - If approved, you may begin using Shared Sick Leave, and it may be applied retroactively.
     - If denied, you will be informed of the reason and may appeal in writing to the Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO) or designee.
5. **Ending Membership**
   - To terminate participation in the Shared Sick Leave Pool, submit a written request to HR/EOD.

Family Medical Leave (FMLA)

Reference: HRAP 06.05 Family and Medical Leave Act/FMLA Forms

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The FMLA entitles eligible employees to take unpaid, job-protected leave each rolling 12-month period for specified family and medical reasons. To be eligible, the employee must be employed for at least one year and have worked at least 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months.

Eligible employees may take FMLA leave for the birth or placement of a child, to care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition, for their own serious health condition, for certain military-related exigencies, or to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Submit Required Forms**
   - Complete the FMLA Request Form.
   - Provide the FMLA Medical Certification Form completed by your healthcare provider.
   - Submit both forms to VSU HR/EOD.

2. **Using Sick and Annual Leave**
   - Use sick leave when the FMLA leave is for your own serious illness or to care for an eligible family member.
   - Once sick leave is exhausted, the system will automatically use annual leave (vacation).
   - If your FMLA leave is a result of an on-the-job injury, FMLA will run concurrently with worker's compensation.
     - You may choose not to use annual leave at any time by documenting this request on the FMLA Request Form, or in writing via email.
   - If all paid leave is exhausted, the remainder of the leave will be unpaid.

3. **If FMLA is Denied**
   - If denied, you will receive written notice from HR/EOD in a timely manner.
   - The notice will explain the reason for denial.

4. **Benefits During Leave**
   - You may continue your insurance coverage while on FMLA, provided you continue to pay your portion of the premiums.
   - If you use sick or annual leave for any portion of the month, your insurance premiums will be deducted from your paycheck.
   - If you have exhausted your sick and annual leave as of the first day of the month, the OneUSG Benefits Center will bill you directly for that month's insurance premiums.

5. **Returning to Work**
   - Before returning, you must provide HR/EOD with a completed Return to Work Form from your physician.
   - You are responsible for ensuring HR/EOD receives this form in person, by email, or by fax.

Maternal Birth Leave and Paid Parental Leave

Reference: HRAP 06.10 Maternal Birth Leave and Parental Leave

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The University System of Georgia (USG) provides eligible employees with Maternal Birth Leave to support recovery from childbirth and Parental Leave to support the care and bonding with a new child.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Eligibility**
   - Regular benefits-eligible employees who work 30 hours or more per week and have at least six months of continuous USG service.
   - Eligible employees:
     - paid on an hourly basis must have worked a minimum of 700 hours over the six months immediately preceding the requested leave.
     - may take up to 120 hours of Paid Maternal Leave during the three weeks immediately following childbirth.
     - who have become a parent through birth, adoption, or foster placement of a minor child may take a maximum of 240 hours of Paid Parental Leave in a 12-month period.
2. **Submit Required Forms**
   - Either a Maternal Birth Leave or a Paid Parental Leave form should be submitted to HR/EOD.
3. **Coordination with Other Leave**
   - Maternal Birth Leave must be used before Parental Leave.
   - Maternal Birth Leave and Parental Leave shall run concurrently with FMLA.

Personal & Educational Leaves of Absence (Faculty ONLY)

Reference: HRAP 06.11 Personal Leave
HRAP 06.12 Policy on Education Leave without Pay

POLICY AT A GLANCE: At the discretion of the President of an institution, personal leave of absence without pay for periods not to exceed one year may be approved.

Personal Leave allows Presidents to approve up to one year of leave when it serves the institution's best interest.

Educational Leave may be granted for up to one year with or without pay by the President, with longer periods or extensions requiring Chancellor approval. Paid educational leave is intended to support scholarly work and professional development.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Personal Leave of Absence**
   - **Use Accrued Leave First**
     - Exhaust all earned vacation and sick leave before personal leave may be approved.
   - **Submit Documentation**
     - Provide HR/EOD with an official memorandum signed by the President that outlines the reason for the approved personal leave.
   - **Insurance Coverage**
     - If approved, you may choose to keep your insurance benefits active. During this period:
       - The institution will continue paying its share of the premiums.
       - You are responsible for paying your share of the premiums.
     - If denied, you will be notified in writing.

2. **Educational Leave of Absence**
   - **Prepare Request**
     - Submit your request for educational leave in writing to your supervisor.
   - **Supervisor Review**
     - If your supervisor supports the request, the supervisor will move the request through the chain of command to the President's Office for final approval.
   - **Sign Agreement**
     - If approved, work with your department to acknowledge the required return-to-work period:
       - Leave with pay for less than one year = return for at least one year.
       - Leave with pay for one year = return for at least two years.
     - If denied, you will be notified in writing.
   - **Reimbursement Obligation**
     - If you do not return for the required period, you must reimburse the institution for:
       - All compensation received during the leave.
       - All expenses paid by the University System of Georgia on your behalf, including benefit costs.

Educational Support Leave

Reference: HRAP 06.03 Education Support Leave

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Educational Support Leave provides eligible full-time, regular USG employees up to eight hours of paid leave per year to engage in activities that directly support student achievement and academic programs in Georgia. This leave does not affect other leave balances, does not accumulate or carry over, is not paid out upon employment changes, and can be taken in increments according to the institution's standard minimum leave period. Eligibility requirements must be met before use.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Confirm Eligibility**
   - Educational Support Leave may only be used to support your child or a dependent in their education. It cannot be used for yourself or your spouse.
   - You cannot receive pay for services performed while on Educational Support Leave.
2. **Obtain Approval**
   - Request leave approval from your supervisor before providing the service.
   - Be prepared to provide written verification from a school administrator, teacher, or other official if requested by your department/supervisor.
3. **Understand Institutional Discretion**
   - VSU has the authority to approve or deny requests based on operational needs or for reasons such as conduct, attendance, or performance.
   - Denials will be applied consistently to all employees in similar situations.
4. **Follow Restrictions**
   - You may not use Educational Support Leave for political purposes or activities.
   - The leave cannot be accumulated, carried over to another year, or transferred in value.
5. **Track Your Hours**
   - You may use up to 8 paid hours per calendar year, regardless of whether you transfer to another USG institution.
   - Each institution is responsible for verifying that you have not already used your annual allotment.
6. **At Termination**
   - Any unused Educational Support Leave has no cash value and will not be paid out upon separation from employment.

Military Leave

Reference: HRAP 06.08 Military Leave

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Military Leave allows USG employees with active duty orders up to 18 paid workdays per federal fiscal year. After this, employees may use accrued annual leave, with any additional absence considered unpaid. Employees must provide active-duty orders. National Guard members on state active duty during a gubernatorial emergency receive up to 30 days of paid leave per federal fiscal year.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Notify Your Employer**
   - As soon as you receive your military activation orders, notify, in writing, your supervisor and HR/EOD.
   - Provide as much practical advance notice before your activation date.

2. **Provide Documentation Upon Return**
   - If the leave exceeds 30 days, you may be asked to provide a copy of your documentation once you return to work, to verify your service as concluded.

3. **Compensation While on Military Leave**
   - You will be paid up to 18 days of military leave in any federal fiscal year (October 1 – September 30).
   - If your active-duty service spans two fiscal years, you are eligible for 18 paid days in each fiscal year.
   - Once paid military leave is exhausted, you may use your accumulated annual leave for continued compensation, if available.

Specialty Leaves

Reference: HRAP 06.09 Organ and Marrow Donation/How to Submit an Absence/Leave Request in OneUSG/HRAP 06.18 Voting and Court Duty Leave

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Employees of the University System of Georgia are authorized the use of specialty leave if applicable.

Organ and Marrow Donation Leave provides employees with 30 paid days for organ donation and 7 paid days for bone marrow donation, without affecting accrued annual or sick leave. Voting Leave ensures employees have time to vote if polls do not accommodate their work schedule. Jury Duty and Witness Leave grants regular employees paid time off to serve on a jury or as a witness, with normal pay for hours missed.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Organ and Marrow Donation Leave**
   - Obtain a statement from a licensed medical practitioner or hospital administrator confirming your organ or marrow donation.
   - Notify your supervisor in advance of your planned leave so that coverage for your duties can be arranged.
   - Contact HR/EOD to complete the required FMLA documentation.

For all leave types listed below, work with your supervisor to request leave.

2. **Court / Jury Duty Leave**
   - Submit a leave request through the system of record (e.g., OneUSG), selecting “Jury Duty” as the type of leave.
   - Notify your supervisor as soon as possible to arrange coverage while you are away.
   - Provide your supervisor with a copy of the court notification you received.
3. **Voting Leave**
   - Submit a leave request through the system of record (e.g., OneUSG), selecting “Voting” as the type of leave.
   - Notify your supervisor in advance to coordinate departmental scheduling.
   - Take up to two hours during your normal schedule to vote, unless you already have sufficient time outside of work hours.

Holidays

Reference: HR/EOD, Holiday Schedule 2024-2026 (valdosta.edu)
BOR Holiday Policy 08.02.06

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Employees are granted 12 holidays. Each USG institution shall establish official paid holidays each calendar year for employees at the institution. The number of paid holidays shall equal the number of paid holidays allowed for State of Georgia employees under state law. These holidays shall be awarded in addition to the vacation time earned and shall be observed in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth by the Board of Regents, the USG, and the institution. A terminating employee shall not be paid for any official holidays occurring after the last working day of employment.

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

- **New Year's Day – Holiday**
- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Holiday**
- **Memorial Day – Holiday**
- **Juneteenth – Holiday**
- **Independence Day – Holiday**
- **Labor Day – Holiday**
- **Thanksgiving (Day 1) – Holiday**
- **Thanksgiving (Day 2) – Holiday**
- **Christmas (Day 1) – Mandatory Leave Day**
- **Christmas (Day 2) – Holiday**

1. **Using Leave Around Holidays**
   - Requesting Additional Leave
     - With supervisor approval, you may request annual or sick leave in connection with holidays.
   - Eligibility for Holiday Pay
     - You will be paid for a holiday only if you work (or are on approved paid leave) the scheduled workday before and after the holiday.
   - Enter your leave for any mandatory leave prior to the break.

Inclement Weather or Other Emergencies

Reference: HRAP 06.07 Inclement Weather or Other Emergencies

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The University System of Georgia allows leave under specific guidelines. This policy establishes uniform procedures during the official closure, or delayed opening, or reduced operations of USG Institutions and the treatment of employee absences from work during periods of inclement weather or other emergencies.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Assess Your Ability to Commute**
   - If the University is open, make every effort to safely get to work.
   - If driving or commuting is difficult, use your judgment to determine if you can safely travel.
2. **Notify Your Supervisor**
   - Contact your supervisor and report your specific situation.
   - Confirm and understand how inclement weather procedures apply to your work circumstances.
3. **University and State Announcements**
   - The Governor decides on conditions affecting statewide agency closures.
   - The President may declare leave with or without pay during inclement weather or emergencies.
   - If conditions develop during the workday, agencies will be notified by phone or fax regarding changes to work hours.
   - If conditions occur overnight, official announcements of delayed openings or closures will be made through local media outlets.
4. **Stay Informed**
   - Sign up for VSU's Campus Alert System to receive alerts on your personal phone or email.
   - Check the University webpage for updates.
   - Rely only on official announcements; information from other stations may be inaccurate.
5. **Report to Work If No Official Notification**
   - If no announcement of delayed opening or closure is made, report to work as scheduled.
   - If unable to attend, contact your supervisor or appropriate agency personnel as directed.

Healthcare and Voluntary Benefits

Reference: Enrolling in USG Health Benefits HRAP 07.08 Group Health Insurance

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Eligible employees have 30 days from their hire or eligibility date to enroll in healthcare and voluntary benefits. Coverage generally begins the first of the month after eligibility, or immediately if eligibility starts on the first.

Eligible employees must work 30 hours or more per week and can enroll themselves and their dependents, including a legal spouse, children up to age 26, and disabled children over 26 with proof. Documentation such as a marriage certificate, birth certificate, tax return, or joint utility bill is required to add dependents.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Enrolling in Benefits**
   - Make all elections through the OneUSG Connect Manage My Benefits Portal here.
2. **Understanding Surcharges**

Tobacco Surcharge

- Indicate whether you or any covered family members aged 18 or older use tobacco.
  - A $150 per month surcharge applies for each tobacco user, including yourself, your spouse, and children aged 18+.
- If you do not complete the tobacco certification during enrollment, the surcharge is applied by default.
- Re-certify your tobacco-use status each year during Open Enrollment.

3. **Spouse Surcharge**
   - If enrolling your spouse, indicate whether your spouse has other employer-based coverage.
     - A $150 per month working spouse surcharge applies if your spouse has other coverage available.
4. **Making Changes to Your Benefits**
   - After your initial elections, changes can only be made during Open Enrollment or following a qualifying life event.
   - Common qualifying life events include:
     - Birth or adoption of a child (including stepchildren and legally placed foster children)
     - Death of a covered dependent
     - Marriage or divorce
     - Loss of other health coverage, (e.g., loss of spousal coverage, etc.).
     - Change in employment status that affects eligibility benefits (for you or your eligible dependents)

Retirement Plans

Reference: USG Retirement Plans Overview (usg.edu)

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Employees who work twenty (20) hours or more per week, you must be enrolled in one of USG's mandatory retirement plans: the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS) or the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP). Your eligibility for these plans depends on your employment status (exempt or nonexempt) and your past employment history.

PROCEDURES:

Mandatory Retirement Elections:

1. **Make Your Election**
   - All employees eligible for TRS or ORP must make a retirement plan election within 60 days of employment.
   - If no election is made within 60 days, you will be automatically enrolled in TRS.
   - Important: Retirement plan elections are irrevocable.

2. **ORP (Optional Retirement Plan) Overview**
   - ORP is a 401(a) defined contribution plan.
   - Your account balance grows from employee and employer contributions plus investment earnings.
   - You select and manage your investments through OneUSG Connect.
   - Investment Firm Options:
     - Fidelity Investments: 800-343-0860
     - TIAA: 800-842-2252
     - Corebridge Financial: 866-279-1444

3. **TRS (Teachers Retirement System) Overview**
   - TRS is a defined benefit plan.
   - Retirement benefits are calculated using a formula based on length of service and average monthly salary over your highest 24 months of earned compensation.
   - TRS contact: www.trsga.com | 800-352-0650

Supplemental Retirement Options:
USG also offers additional ways to save more for your retirement. You can contribute to the 403(b) Plan, the 457(b) Plan or both. To learn more, visit the USG website here.

COBRA

Reference: BPM 05.01.05 COBRA

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1986 (COBRA), employees or dependents enrolled in a health or dental plan who experience a qualifying event, which subsequently results in loss of coverage, will become COBRA qualified beneficiaries. The employees or dependents have the option of continuing coverage under the University System of GA plan(s).

PROCEDURES:

1. Reporting a Spouse/Dependent Qualifying Event

- For events such as divorce, death of the employee, etc., notify the OneUSG Connect Benefits Call Center or update your status in the OneUSG Connect Benefits website within 60 days of the qualifying event.
- Failure to report within 60 days will result in loss of the right to continue medical coverage under COBRA.

2. Reporting a Separated Employee Qualifying Event

- Separations are reported automatically to the COBRA Administrator through the system of record (e.g., OneUSG).
- Within thirty (30) days after benefits end, employees will receive a COBRA information packet by mail from the OneUSG Connect Benefits Center.
- For questions, please contact the OneUSG Connect Benefits Call Center at 1-844-587-4236.

3. Premium Payments

- Once COBRA is elected, you will receive monthly bills from the COBRA Administrator.
- Your first payment must be made within 45 days of electing coverage.
- Ongoing payments must be made monthly to maintain coverage.
- You are responsible for paying the full premium (the employer and employee cost) plus a 2% administrative fee.

Worker's Compensation

Reference: HRAP 07.14 Worker's Compensation and Return-To-Work

POLICY AT A GLANCE: All employees of the University are covered under the provisions of the Worker's Compensation Act. This Act provides protection for the employee in the event of injury or death while performing services for the University.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Employee Responsibilities**
   - **Report the Incident**
     - Notify your immediate supervisor within 24 hours of any work-related accident, injury, exposure, or illness, no matter how minor.
   - **Seek Medical Attention if Needed**
     - For emergencies or situations requiring immediate medical care, call 911.
2. **Supervisor Responsibilities**
   - **Ensure an Incident Report Is Completed**
     - Complete an Incident Notice Form for every accident, injury, exposure, or illness, regardless of severity.
   - **Report to Amerisys When Medical Attention Is Needed**
     - For any injury requiring medical care, contact Amerisys at 877-656-RISK (7475). Be sure to document the claim number provided by Amerisys.
     - Provide the claim number to both the employee and HR/EOD.
     - Reporting is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
   - **Be Prepared to Provide the Following Information When Reporting:**
     - Name, address, Social Security number, age, and gender of the injured employee
     - Institution name, address, and telephone number
     - Date, time, and description of the incident
     - Part of body injured and type of injury
     - Employee's hourly, weekly, or monthly wage
     - Name and address of the treating physician or hospital
     - Whether the employee has returned to work

SECTION:

ATTENDANCE AND SEPARATION

Attendance Guidelines & Expectations (Job Abandonment, etc.)

Reference: BOR Policy 08.02.18 Personnel Conduct HRAP 06.01 Annual Leave

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Employee attendance directly impacts VSU's operations and is considered in hiring, promotions, transfers, and merit awards. Misuse of leave, excessive absences, unexcused absences, or failure to remain at work may result in disciplinary action. Tardiness is arriving late and may lead to corrective action if repeated.

No call/no show occurs when an employee misses a shift without notifying a supervisor within 30 minutes. Unjustified absences are those not accepted as reasonable by a supervisor; medical-related absences require HR/EOD consultation. Leaving work without permission or exceeding breaks is considered failure to remain on duty. Excessive absence negatively affecting work completion may also lead to action, with HR/EOD consulted for medical-related cases.

Official work hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

PROCEDURES:

For the purposes of the policy, excessive absences will be defined as 5-10 unscheduled absences within a rolling 12-month period.

1. **Know the Rules**
   - Understand what constitutes full-time and part-time attendance, as well as your department or college's standards for tardiness and absenteeism.
   - Be aware of acceptable reasons for absences and the required reporting procedures.

2. **Follow Your Schedule**
   - Adhere to your assigned work schedule, including start times, breaks, and end times.
   - Allow sufficient time for commuting and preparation so you arrive on time.

3. **Reporting Absences and Tardiness**
   - Notify your supervisor as soon as possible if you anticipate being late or absent. Provide the reason and, if applicable, an estimated arrival time.
   - Enter all leave taken into OneUSG immediately upon your return.

4. **Requesting Leave**
   - Submit leave requests in advance and ensure they are approved by your supervisor.
   - Exceptions apply only in emergencies.
   - Approval of annual leave (except when used to cover an health-related absence) will be subject to the supervisor's discretion.

5. **Health-Related Absences**
   - If you need to be absent or late due to illness or health condition, contact HR/EOD for guidance.

6. **Attendance During the Provisional Period**
   - During the initial six-month provisional period, any pattern of absences, lateness, failure to report, or other violations of work rules may result in further disciplinary action up to and including termination.

7. **Presumed Resignation / Job Abandonment (Staff)**
   - An employee who is absent for three consecutive working days without authorization and cannot provide a satisfactory explanation will be considered to have abandoned their job or resigned.

   - Supervisors (or designees) are expected to make reasonable attempts to contact the employee during this period. However, contact alone does not excuse the absence.

Voluntary Resignation (Faculty)

Reference: BOR Policy 08.03.04.01 Voluntary Resignation by Faculty

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Any faculty members employed under written contract for the fiscal or academic year shall give at least 60 calendar days written notice of their intention to resign to the direct supervisor as well as the President of the institution or his or her designee.

Any faculty member employed under written contract for the fiscal or academic year who is absent for 10 or more consecutive business days without written approval from the faculty member's direct supervisor may be considered to have abandoned the position and voluntarily resigned from the institution.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Know the Rules**
   - Understand your department or college's standards for notification of resignation and extended absences.

2. **Health-Related Absences**
   - If your absence is related to illness or health condition, contact HR/EOD for guidance.

3. **Extenuating Circumstances**
   - If extenuating circumstances exist, contact HR/EOD for guidance on required documentation.

4. **Presumed Resignation / Job Abandonment**
   - Any faculty member who is absent for ten consecutive working days without authorization and cannot provide a satisfactory explanation will be considered to have abandoned their job or resigned.

   - Supervisors (or designees) are expected to make reasonable attempts to contact the employee during this period. However, contact alone does not excuse the absence.

Out-Processing

Reference: HRAP 03.21 Resignations

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Employees resigning from their position must submit a letter of resignation to their supervisor. The supervisor must forward the letter to HR/EOD.

Employees moving to a new position in a different department within VSU or to another institution within the USG must submit a letter; however, it must indicate that the employee will be transferring to a new department or institution.

PROCEDURES:

Voluntary Separations:

1. Provide Notice

- Bi-Weekly Employees: Provide at least 2 weeks' notice.
- Monthly Employees: Provide at least 1 months' notice.
- Faculty: Provide a minimum of 60 days' notice, between contracts.

2. Receive Exit Letter/Separation Notice

- HR/EOD will provide an Exit Letter with instructions on required actions before separation.
- Examples of required actions include:
  - Returning equipment, books, p-card, and keys
  - Updating or removing system access

3. Retirees

- Retirees will have the option to request a new Retiree I.D. card.
- Present the VSU Exit Letter to OneCard to obtain the new I.D. card.

4. Return of University Property

- Return all university property by the exit date to the issuing department.
- Failure to return property may result in financial obligation to the employee.

Involuntary Separations: HR/EOD will oversee and provide guidance throughout this process.

Ongoing Email Access

Reference: Information Technology FAQs

POLICY AT A GLANCE: For business continuity, the University may need to maintain access to VSU mailboxes of former employees or transfers to capture email requests that have been sent and to redirect VSU matters to the appropriate people. As such, former employees or transfers who are also alumni and who worked in sensitive or highly confidential areas, involuntarily separated with the university, or resigned in lieu of termination will be given new email accounts in which to utilize.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Alumni Email Access**
   - For alumni graduating Fall 2025 and beyond, VSU will maintain access to their Microsoft 365 email account for 1-year post-graduation.
   - After the one-year period, the alumni email account will be disabled.
   - For alumni who graduated in Spring 2025 or earlier, their current VSU email access will continue until June 2026.
   - Access can only be restored if the alum:
     - Re-enrolls as an active VSU student, or
     - Becomes a VSU employee
   - This policy does not affect current retirees—their access remains under existing terms.

2. **Former Employee (Non-Alumni/Non-Retiree) Access**
   - When a VSU employee separates (unless they qualify as a retiree or active student), they will lose access to all email and related services within 30–45 days after separation (or as otherwise determined by IT/Policy).
   - When possible, they will be given 14 calendar days to capture and save any personal folders or items from their mailbox before deactivation.
   - Backup or migration of personal data should be their responsibility during that window.

3. **Employees transitioning out of sensitive roles will be given a different VSU email.**

Eligible for Rehire

Reference: HRAP 03.06 Eligibility for Rehire

POLICY AT A GLANCE: USG employees that separate voluntarily or involuntarily from employment with the USG will receive one of three rehire eligibility designations as follows:

- Eligible for Rehire
- Ineligible for Rehire
- Conditional

A designation into one of the three categories will be made regardless of the separation reason (resignation, retirement, discharge, job abandonment or other). Employees must be notified in writing, at the point of separation or as soon as reasonably possible, if they receive a conditional or ineligible for rehire designation and may appeal their rehire status through established institutional procedures. Employees designated as eligible for rehire do not need to be notified of this designation.

PROCEDURES

1. **Initiation of the Rehire Review**
   The Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) leads the rehire eligibility review for all separating employees. The review may begin:
   - As part of the normal separation process.
   - Following a recommendation from the employee's supervisor.
   - Based on information received by HR/EOD through an investigation, disciplinary matter, resignation, job abandonment, or other employment action.

   A supervisor's recommendation is not required for the CHRO to initiate the review.

2. **Review of the Separation**
   The CHRO will review the circumstances surrounding the employee's separation and may consult with the supervisor, Legal Affairs, the University System Office, or other appropriate individuals.
   The review may include:
   - The reason for separation.
   - Relevant performance, conduct, attendance, or disciplinary records.
   - Pending or completed investigations.
   - Whether the employee provided appropriate notice and completed required out-processing.
   - The seriousness and frequency of documented concerns.
   - Applicable BOR, USG, and VSU policies.
   - Rehire designations assigned in comparable circumstances.

   Supervisors and other responsible parties must provide requested information and documentation to support the review.

3. **Available Rehire Designations**
   Each separating employee will receive one of the following designations:
   - **Eligible for Rehire:** The employee may be considered for future USG employment through the normal application and selection process.

- **Conditional:** The employee may be considered for future employment only after the circumstances of the prior separation are reviewed and any established conditions are satisfied.
- **Ineligible for Rehire:** The employee may not be considered for future USG employment unless the designation is changed through the applicable review or appeal process.

A rehire designation does not guarantee future employment or selection for a position.

4. Recommendation from the Supervisor

When a supervisor recommends a Conditional or Ineligible for Rehire designation, the supervisor must:

- Contact the CHRO before communicating the proposed designation to the employee.
- Explain the basis for the recommendation.
- Provide all relevant supporting documentation.
- Participate in any additional review requested by the CHRO.

The supervisor's recommendation will be considered as part of the overall review but does not limit the CHRO's responsibility to evaluate all relevant information.

5. Final Determination and System Office Request

After completing the review and any necessary consultation, the supervisor will make the final institutional determination regarding the appropriate rehire designation.

The supervisor will also submit any required request to the University System Office. The CHRO will coordinate the process, prepare or review the supporting documentation, and work with the supervisor, Legal Affairs, and the University System Office as necessary.

The proposed designation must not be communicated as final until all required reviews and approvals have been completed.

6. Conditional Designations

A Conditional designation may be appropriate when the circumstances do not support an Ineligible for Rehire designation but require additional review before the individual may be rehired.

The documentation must identify:

- The reason for the Conditional designation.
- The concern that must be reviewed before reemployment.
- Any conditions that must be satisfied before the individual may be considered for rehire.

If an individual with a Conditional designation applies for a position, the hiring department must contact the CHRO before proceeding with an interview, offer, or appointment. The CHRO will review the prior separation, consult with the appropriate parties, and determine whether the individual may proceed in the hiring process.

7. Ineligible for Rehire Designations

An Ineligible for Rehire designation may be considered when supported by serious or documented circumstances, including misconduct, policy violations, dishonesty, workplace safety concerns, job abandonment, or other conduct materially inconsistent with continued USG employment.

The determination will be made on a case-by-case basis. A resignation submitted during an investigation or disciplinary process does not prevent VSU from completing its review or pursuing an appropriate rehire designation.

The CHRO will coordinate any required consultation with Legal Affairs and submission to the University System Office.

8. Employee Notification

Employees designated as Conditional or Ineligible for Rehire must be notified in writing at the time of separation or as soon as reasonably possible after the designation becomes final.

The CHRO will coordinate the written notification, which will include:

- The assigned designation.
- A brief explanation of the basis for the designation.
- The effective date.
- Instructions and the deadline for submitting an appeal.

Employees designated as Eligible for Rehire are not required to receive written notice.

9. Appeal of a Rehire Designation

An employee may appeal a Conditional or Ineligible for Rehire designation by submitting a written appeal to the CHRO within 10 business days of receiving the notice.

The appeal should identify:

- The designation being challenged.
- The reason the employee believes the designation should be changed.
- Any relevant information or documentation that was not previously considered.

The CHRO will coordinate the review of the appeal and may consult with the supervisor, Legal Affairs, the University System Office, or another appropriate institutional official. The employee will receive written notice of the final decision.

10. Changes to a Designation

A rehire designation may be reconsidered when:

- An appeal is granted.
- New or corrected information becomes available.
- The conditions associated with a Conditional designation have been satisfied.
- A review identifies a need to ensure consistency with policy or comparable cases.

The CHRO will coordinate the review and any required request to the University System Office. Any change must be documented and entered into the appropriate personnel system and employment record.

11. Confidentiality and Employment Inquiries

Supervisors and departments must refer questions concerning an employee's rehire eligibility to the CHRO or HR/EOD. Rehire designations must not be disclosed or discussed outside an authorized separation, hiring, employment verification, appeal, or institutional review process.

12. Recordkeeping

HR/EOD will retain the rehire designation, supporting documentation, employee notification, University System Office correspondence, appeal materials, and final decision in accordance with applicable records-retention requirements.

SECTION:

PAYROLL & COMPENSATION

Time Reporting & Pay Periods

Reference: HRAP, Time and Leave Reporting

POLICY AT A GLANCE: In compliance with University System of Georgia (USG) policies, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the Affordable Care Act (ACA), institutions are responsible for maintaining accurate daily work time records for all non-exempt employees and all part-time employees. Institutions must also maintain records of all absences (whether paid or unpaid) on both nonexempt and exempt employees (including faculty).

PROCEDURES:

1. **Bi-Weekly Employees (Non-Exempt)**
   - Record all actual hours worked in OneUSG for each pay period.
   - Follow the official workweek of Sunday through Saturday.
   - Seek supervisor approval prior to working hours over the standard 40 hours.
   - Depending on departmental policy, if you work more than 40 hours a week, you will either:
     - Accrue compensatory time, or
     - Receive overtime pay.
   - Document all absences and leave requests in the system of record, (e.g., OneUSG).

2. **Monthly Employees (Exempt)**
   - Document all absences and leave requests in the system of record, (e.g., OneUSG).
   - Note that you are not eligible for overtime or compensatory time.

3. **Applies to All Employees (Informational Purposes)**
   - Your pay is subject to all required state and federal taxes and deductions such as insurance and retirement.
   - Direct Deposit is required for all employees.
   - Make all benefit enrollments and employment changes through OneUSG.
   - Always access OneUSG securely:
     - From a hardwired campus computer, or
     - Through the Virtual Labs platform (available through IT).
   - For assistance with Virtual Labs, contact the IT Helpdesk at 229-245-4357.

Compensatory Time & Overtime

Reference: HRAP 02.16 Workweek and Overtime

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The federal Fair Labor Standards Act, as amended, establishes minimum wage rates, maximum work hours, overtime pay requirements, equal pay standards and child labor restrictions for employees subject to its provisions. This document establishes USG policy in areas not covered by the FLSA or in which the FLSA allows for alternative methods of compliance.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Non-Exempt (Biweekly) Employees**
   - Track all hours worked each week in OneUSG.
   - Identify if overtime applies:
     - Overtime begins after 40 hours worked in a week.
     - Holidays or absences do not count toward the 40-hour threshold.
   - Understand that your department may provide compensatory time (comp time) instead of overtime pay.
     - Compensatory time accrues at time and a half for hours worked beyond 40.
   - Vacation leave requests submitted in the system of record (e.g., OneUSG) will use accrued comp time first, consistent with the system's cascading leave rules.
   - Monitor your compensatory time balance:
     - The maximum accrual is 240 hours.
     - Any hours that exceed this limit will be paid out by the institution annually.

2. **Exempt (Monthly) Employees**
   - According to FLSA rules, exempt employees do not accrue overtime pay or comp time.
   - Tracking time is only required for leave reporting, not for overtime purposes.

Emergency Call Back/Variant Pay (Differential Pay)

Reference: HRAP 02.03 Variant Pay

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The University System of Georgia (USG) has established a process to provide guidance to institutions concerning variant or premium pay issues.

PROCEDURES:

Applies only to **non-exempt** employees who are called back after leaving work.
Authorized only if needed to:

- Prevent service disruption
- Ensure safety of employees, students, or the public
- Protect property or equipment
- Respond to emergencies involving students, customers, or residents

1. **Emergency Call Back**
   - Confirm authorization: Make sure your supervisor has approved the emergency call back.
   - Track time worked: Record the start and end time of the call back, including if it was by phone or computer.
   - Submit timesheet:
     - Log a minimum of 3 hours (or actual time worked if greater).
     - Do not include travel time.
     - If multiple callbacks occur in 8 hours, log actual time worked (3 hours minimum).
   - Check exclusions: Do not enter as call back if it is within 1 hour of shift start or just an extension of your shift.
2. **On-Call Pay**
   - Verify assignment: Ensure you have been officially scheduled as "on-call."
   - Report restrictions: If your personal time is restricted, note this in case it affects pay.
   - Log hours worked: If called in while on call, record all hours worked in the timesheet.
3. **Shift Differential Pay**
   - Check shift hours: Confirm that most of your scheduled shifts fall between 3:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.
   - Enter hours correctly: Only log hours actually worked (not PTO or absences) under shift differential pay.
4. **Weekend Premium**
   - Confirm eligibility: Make sure your position is designated as eligible for weekend premium.
   - Log eligible hours: Enter all hours worked between 11:00 p.m. Friday and 11:00 p.m. Sunday.
   - Combine pay types: If working a shift eligible for shift differential, make sure both are recorded.
5. **General Reminders**
   - Always review your time sheet before submitting.
   - Report any discrepancies to your supervisor or VSU payroll office promptly.
   - Keep personal notes of callback times, on-call assignments, and shift hours worked.

Garnishment of Pay

Reference: HRAP 02.06 Garnishment of Pay

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Valdosta State University considers the acceptance and settlement of just and honest debts to be a mark of personal responsibility. Failure to secure a release of garnishment will result in payroll withholdings as set forth in state law. Repeated instances are subject to reprimand. Multiple garnishments will be considered grounds for dismissal.

PROCEDURES:

- If you receive notice of a garnishment, contact Budgets and Payroll to discuss at 229-333-5710.
- Cooperate fully as it pertains to any garnishment.

SECTION:

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE

ePerformance

Reference: HRAP 04.08 Performance Evaluation /Tools and Resources

POLICY AT A GLANCE: An annual Performance Evaluation should be prepared on each employee by the immediate supervisor for the purpose of advising the employee of his/her strengths and weaknesses of job performance as well as providing a basis for the determination of pay increases, promotion, demotion, retention, or transfer. It also provides an opportunity for a discussion of job description changes, plans for employee development, and goals for the year. An employee in their provisional period should be evaluated at least once before the provisional period's completion.

Valdosta State University's performance management system of record is ePerformance for staff positions. This annual performance evaluation process must include a personal interview with the immediate supervisor. The process should also include a mid-year review with the supervisor outside the system. The employee has the right to include a written response to the assessment to be included or attached thereto and made a part of the personnel file.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Supervisor Responsibilities:**
   - Begin the evaluation cycle by defining performance goals (criteria) for each direct report in Team Performance.
   - Meet to review and discuss goals during the first quarter (January–March) of the evaluation period.
   - Complete employee evaluations for the previous year between January and March.
   - Meet with the employee to review the ratings and feedback.
2. **Employee Responsibilities:**
   - Complete a self-evaluation in January to reflect on their performance.
   - Acknowledge both the evaluation and the discussion with their supervisor in the system of record to finalize the process.
   - Provide feedback related to their evaluation if applicable.
3. **Missing Evaluation Document**
   - If the supervisor does not see an evaluation document for a direct report in Team Performance, contact HR/EOD for assistance.
4. **Faculty Evaluations**
   - For details on the Faculty Evaluation process, please refer to the information provided on the Faculty Evaluation webpage here.

Performance Management and Counseling

Reference: HRAP 04.08 Performance Evaluation
**See ePerformance policy on pg.48 for details on ePerformance process

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Performance management ensures employees are able to perform at the highest possible standards. The University subscribes to the concept of performance management. Therefore, an annual Performance Evaluation should be prepared for each employee by the immediate supervisor for purposes of advising the employee of his/her strengths and weaknesses of job performance as well as providing a basis for the determination of pay increases, promotion, demotion, retention, or transfer.

PROCEDURES:

Establish Performance Expectations and Goal

1. **Supervisors will:**
   - Meet with each employee to discuss:
     - Supervisor expectations.
     - Performance expectations and priorities.
     - Employee development needs and opportunities.
     - Goals and objectives for the performance year.
   - Document the employees' goals, development plans, and performance expectations as appropriate.
   - Ensure the employee has an opportunity to ask questions and clarify expectations.

Conduct One-on-One and Mid-Year Review Sessions

2. **Supervisors will:**
   - Conduct regular one-on-one meetings with employees to discuss performance, progress, development, and any concerns.
   - Conduct a mid-year review feedback session with each employee.
   - Provide timely and constructive feedback regarding performance and conduct.
   - Document significant performance discussions and agreed-upon actions as appropriate.

Address Unacceptable Performance or Conduct

3. **Supervisors are responsible for addressing unacceptable employee performance or conduct promptly and appropriately.**
   - Consult with HR/EOD to determine the most appropriate course of action based on the circumstances, severity, and nature of the behavior, performance, or conduct issue.
   - Select and implement one or more appropriate corrective or performance-management actions, which may include:
     - Coaching.
     - Training.
     - Resetting or clarifying expectations.
     - Issuing a verbal warning.
     - Issuing a written or final formal warning.

    - Implementing a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).
    - Separating employment.
- Document actions taken and maintain appropriate records in accordance with applicable personnel and recordkeeping requirements.
- Monitor the employee's progress following corrective action and provide additional guidance or intervention as appropriate.

Employee Participation and Response

4. **Employees are expected to:**
    - Actively participate in the performance management process.
    - Work collaboratively with their supervisor to address performance concerns and improve performance when needed.
    - Participate in coaching, training, development activities, or other corrective actions identified through the performance management process.
    - Ask questions and seek clarification when expectations or feedback are unclear.
    - Submit a written response to performance feedback when desired.

Employee Written Responses

5. **When an employee submits a written response to performance feedback:**
    - The employee should provide the response to their supervisor and/or HR/EOD.
    - The response must be shared with HR/EOD.
    - HR/EOD will ensure the response is maintained as part of the employee's official personnel file in accordance with applicable records-management requirements.
    - The employee's written response will be retained with the applicable performance management documentation.

Professional Development

Reference: Professional Certificate Programs, Training Request Form/Percipio Job Aid

POLICY AT A GLANCE: VSU HR/EOD Department offers professional development and training to the VSU campus. Training requests are accepted by departments, leadership, and/or individual employees. In addition to individualized training, HR/EOD offers general training sessions to the campus to support professional development to include but not limited to:

PROCEDURES:

1. **Professional Certificate Programs**
   - Review available programs:
     - Professional Certificate for Administrative Assistants
     - Professional Certificate in Leadership and Management
     - Professional Certificate in Service Excellence
   - Eligible employees may apply at no cost through HR/EOD or the designated registration process.
   - Complete all required courses and activities to earn the certificate.

2. **Percipio (Learning Management System)**
   - All active employees are automatically enrolled in Percipio upon hire.
   - Employees must complete annual compliance training in Percipio as assigned.
   - HR/EOD may create custom learning journeys for employees upon request to support individual development plans.
   - Access to Percipio is deactivated upon resignation, retirement, or termination.

3. **Troubleshooting Access**
   - If an active employee cannot access Percipio or the training portal, they should email training@valdosta.edu.
     - Include your name, department, and VSU ID in the message for faster resolution.

4. **Requesting Custom Training**
   - Employees or supervisors seeking customized training should contact HR/EOD at training@valdosta.edu.
     - Provide a description of the desired training topics and any specific goals or audiences.
     - HR/EOD will coordinate set-up and notify the employee once the training is available.

Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

Reference: HRAP 07.05 Employee Continuing Education and Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) Graduate Tax Waiver Form

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is an employee supplemental educational assistance program which results in the waiver of tuition and fees when an eligible employee attends any University System of Georgia (USG) institution.

Must be a full-time, benefits eligible employee, who has successfully completed their 6-month provisional period.

See policy for other eligibility requirements.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Application and Eligibility**
   - Complete and submit a TAP application each semester you plan to enroll.
   - Ensure that the course or program has available space before registering.
   - You may request up to nine (9) credit hours per semester under TAP.
   - Submit your application by the University System of Georgia deadlines:
     - Fall Semester – July 15
     - Spring Semester – November 15
     - Summer Semester – April 15

2. **Graduate Education Tax Exemption**
   - Graduate tuition assistance is tax-free up to $5,250 per year.
   - If your benefit exceeds this amount, you may complete the Graduate Student Tax Waiver Application each semester TAP is used. Submit the completed waiver with supervisor signatures to HR/EOD for review and approval.

3. **Missed Deadlines**
   - If you fail to submit your TAP application by the deadline, you will not be eligible for TAP benefits for that semester.

4. **Academic Performance**
   - If you earn a grade below "C" or withdraw from a course, you will be ineligible to participate in TAP for the next academic semester.

5. **Registration Timing**
   - Do not register for courses before the designated TAP registration period. If you register too early, you will be notified to drop the course(s) and re-register during the approved period.

6. **Employment Status Changes**
   - If you leave employment after the start of a term, your TAP benefit remains valid for that term.
     - Coordination between your home institution and the teaching institution may be required to confirm coverage.

7. **Appeals**
    - Appeals for a TAP-related decisions can be submitted via email to the Chief HR Officer (CHRO) or designee for review.

Employee Recognition

Reference:https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/finance-admin/human-resources/red.php

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The University Employee Recognition program, RED (Recognizing the Excellent and Distinguished) is designed to celebrate the remarkable contributions of our faculty and staff members. Nominations can be submitted for Student Assistants, Graduate Assistants, Staff, Faculty, or Teams.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Nomination Process**
    - Submit nominations through the RED webpage.
    - Nominations are reviewed and announced in a monthly campus-wide email.
    - Supervisors are encouraged to use the Supervisor's Toolkit to foster a culture of appreciation and recognition within their teams.
    - For assistance or questions about the RED program visit the webpage here or contact red@valdosta.edu.

SECTION:

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Standards of Personnel Conduct/Working Environment

Reference: BOR Policy 08.02.18.01.04 Personnel Conduct

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Valdosta State University is a learning environment based on trust and mutual respect in which open dialogue, vigorous debate, and the free exchange of ideas are welcome. The University is equally dedicated to the core values of community, including a commitment to practice ***civility***, ***integrity***, and ***citizenship***.

Each member of the USG community is responsible for doing his or her part by upholding the highest standards of personnel conduct.

PROCEDURES:

Employees are expected to comply with professional standards, University policies, departmental expectations, and the institution's core values. Corrective action should be applied consistently while considering the seriousness of the conduct, the employee's history, relevant circumstances, and whether prior corrective action has been effective.

Corrective action is generally progressive, but the University may begin at any level based on the seriousness, frequency, or impact of the conduct. Provisional employees may be subject to corrective action without the right to appeal, except as otherwise provided by law or policy.

Required Steps Before Issuing a Reprimand
Before issuing a Verbal Reprimand, Written Reprimand, Last Formal Reprimand, suspension, demotion, or termination, the supervisor must:

1. Contact HR/EOD before informing the employee that a reprimand or other corrective action will be issued.
2. Provide HR/EOD with the relevant facts, documentation, applicable policies, witness information, and the employee's prior corrective-action history.
3. Work with HR/EOD to determine the appropriate misconduct group and level of corrective action.
4. Allow HR/EOD to review the proposed corrective action and supporting documentation before it is presented to the employee.
5. Provide the employee with notice of the concern and a reasonable opportunity to respond.
6. Consider the employee's response in consultation with HR/EOD before finalizing the action.
7. Issue the corrective action only after receiving HR/EOD's approval to proceed.
8. Submit the final corrective-action documentation to HR/EOD for placement in the appropriate personnel record.

Supervisors should not promise, announce, or issue specific corrective action before completing this consultation. If immediate action is necessary to protect employees, students, University property, or operations, the supervisor should contact HR/EOD and University Police, when appropriate, immediately.

Group I: Major Misconduct

Potential Action: Last Formal Reprimand, suspension, demotion, or termination, depending on severity, frequency, impact, and surrounding circumstances.

Examples include:

1. Interfering with another employee's performance or substantially disrupting University operations.
2. Threatening, intimidating, harassing, or coercing another person.
3. Engaging in grossly offensive, obscene, or seriously inappropriate conduct.
4. Engaging in prohibited drug or alcohol-related conduct at work or on University property.
5. Possessing a weapon in violation of applicable law or University policy.
6. Fighting or engaging in workplace violence.
7. Engaging in sexual harassment.
8. Receiving unauthorized compensation for work performed.
9. Failing to report a criminal conviction to HR/EOD within the required timeframe.
10. Gaining unauthorized access to records or confidential information.
11. Willfully damaging or stealing University or personal property.
12. Falsifying University records, documents, or employment materials.
13. Seriously violating purchasing or procurement-card requirements.
14. Stealing or misappropriating funds or misusing State property.
15. Abandoning a position or being unavailable for work without authorization or communication.
16. Engaging in serious insubordination, gross negligence, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or other major misconduct.

Supervisor Procedure:

1. Address any immediate safety, security, or operational concern.
2. Preserve relevant records, communications, video, documents, and other evidence.
3. Contact HR/EOD immediately and before confronting the employee about potential discipline.
4. Provide HR/EOD with a written summary of the incident, supporting information, and the names of potential witnesses.
5. Do not independently investigate serious allegations unless directed by HR/EOD.
6. Participate in any investigation or fact-finding process coordinated by HR/EOD or another authorized office.
7. Provide the employee with notice of the concern and an opportunity to respond, as directed by HR/EOD.
8. Consult with HR/EOD and appropriate University leadership regarding the findings and proposed action.
9. Issue the approved corrective action and explain the employee's expectations, available review rights, and consequences of additional misconduct.
10. Forward all final documentation to HR/EOD.

Group II: Moderate Misconduct

Potential Action: Written Reprimand, Performance Improvement Plan, or a higher level of corrective action when the conduct is serious or repeated.

Examples include:

1. Failing to perform assigned duties or follow departmental rules.
2. Failing to maintain required work quality or productivity.
3. Violating information technology policies.
4. Being absent from work without authorization.
5. Engaging in insubordination or willful disobedience.
6. Engaging in dishonest conduct.
7. Smoking or vaping in prohibited areas or disregarding safety requirements.
8. Refusing to cooperate with authorized University administrative processes.
9. Failing to return following approved leave without notifying the supervisor, except when otherwise protected or permitted by law or policy.
10. Using State property for unauthorized personal purposes or personal gain.
11. Violating University policies or procedures.
12. Failing to report criminal charges or arrests within the required timeframe.
13. Engaging in other moderate misconduct, neglect of duties, or repeated minor misconduct.

Supervisor Procedure:

1. Document the incident, including dates, expectations, prior discussions, and the effect on the department or University.
2. Gather relevant records and identify individuals who may have pertinent information.
3. Contact HR/EOD before advising the employee that a reprimand will be issued.
4. Review the facts, the employee's prior corrective-action history, and the proposed response with HR/EOD.
5. Meet with the employee, explain the concern, and provide an opportunity to respond.
6. Share the employees' response and any additional information with HR/EOD.
7. Determine the appropriate action with HR/EOD, which may include coaching, a Written Reprimand, a Performance Improvement Plan, or a higher-level action.
8. Have HR/EOD review and approve the written documentation before it is issued.
9. Meet with the employee to issue the approved action and explain the required improvement, applicable deadlines, and consequences of recurrence.
10. Monitor compliance and document follow-ups.
11. Submit the final documentation to HR/EOD.

Group III: Minor Misconduct or Performance Concerns

Potential Progressive Actions:

1. Coaching or documented counseling
2. Verbal Reprimand
3. Written Reprimand
4. Performance Improvement Plan, when appropriate
5. Last Formal Reprimand or other action for continued or repeated concerns

Examples include:

1. Failing to follow routine safety procedures.
2. Engaging in rude, discourteous, or unprofessional behavior, including inappropriate profanity.
3. Reporting late, leaving early, or being temporarily absent without authorization.
4. Engaging in excessive absenteeism or misusing sick leave, subject to applicable leave protections.
5. Failing to maintain an orderly, safe, or sanitary work area.
6. Entering or remaining in an unauthorized area.
7. Wasting work time, loitering, or sleeping while on duty.
8. Damaging property through improper use or neglect.
9. Engaging in counterproductive or persistently unprofessional behavior.
10. Failing to meet established performance standards.
11. Engaging in other minor misconduct or performance deficiencies.

Supervisor Procedure:

1. Identify the specific conduct or performance expectation that was not met.
2. Document the relevant facts, dates, prior guidance, and effect of the concern.
3. Contact HR/EOD before characterizing the discussion as a Verbal Reprimand or issuing any other reprimand.
4. Review with HR/EOD whether the matter should be addressed through coaching, documented counseling, corrective action, or performance management.
5. Meet with the employee, describe the concern and expected standard, and allow the employee to respond.
6. If coaching or counseling is appropriate, clearly explain the required improvement and document the discussion.
7. If a reprimand is appropriate, obtain HR/EOD's review and approval before issuing it.
8. Establish reasonable expectations, deadlines, and follow-up dates.
9. Monitor performance or conduct and document whether improvement occurs.
10. Consult HR/EOD before escalating the matter to the next level.
11. Submit all formal corrective-action documentation to HR/EOD.

Performance Improvement Plans

A Performance Improvement Plan may be used when an employee needs structured guidance and a defined period to correct performance deficiencies. Before implementing a plan, the supervisor must work with HR/EOD to:

1. Identify the specific performance standards that are not being met.
2. Describe the improvement required in measurable terms.
3. Identify available training, resources, or supervisory support.
4. Establish the review period and follow-up dates.
5. Explain how progress will be evaluated.
6. State the potential consequences if sufficient and sustained improvement does not occur.
7. Review the plan with the employee and provide an opportunity for questions.
8. Conduct and document follow-up meetings throughout the review period.

Amorous Relationships

Reference: HRAP 04.01 Amorous Relationships

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Employees may not engage in amorous relationships with employees who hold positions of unequal power. The same is true for faculty members, including graduate teaching assistants, who have amorous relationships with students they teach or evaluate or whose terms of education or employment they could directly affect. Such relationships create inherent conflicts of interest and lead to complaints of favoritism, decreased employee morale, mistrust by colleagues, complaints of undue access, claims of sexual harassment, and other negative implications for the work environment.

PROCEDURES:

1. Employee Disclosure

- All VSU employees, including graduate students, must promptly report if they are asked to evaluate, supervise, or make decisions regarding a USG employee or student with whom they:
  - Are currently involved in an amorous relationship, or
  - Have previously been involved in such a relationship.
- Disclosures should be made immediately upon awareness of the potential conflict.

2. Reporting Violations

- Employees or students who believe in good faith that a violation of this policy has occurred should promptly report it through the institution's established reporting process.
- Reports may be made to the Office of HR/EOD, the Title IX Office, or the Office of Ethics and Compliance, depending on the situation.

3. Investigation

- Reported violations will be promptly and thoroughly investigated by the institution in accordance with USG and VSU procedures.
- All investigations will be handled with attention to confidentiality, fairness, and due process.

4. Violations

- Employees found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

5. Department Leadership and Supervisor Consultation

- Supervisors or department leaders should consult HR/EOD in the following situations:
  - When learning of or becoming involved in a workplace relationship with power dynamics.
  - When considering a promotion, demotion, reassignment, or role change involving someone in a relationship with a supervisor or other leadership position.
  - To discuss restructuring, policy compliance, or risk mitigation strategies.
  - When an employee raises concerns about favoritism or retaliation related to such a relationship.

Appearance

Reference: BOR Policy 08.02.18 Personnel Conduct

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Professionalism as an educational institution is reflected in the appearance and manner of our faculty, staff, and employees. Consequently, it is necessary to maintain and enhance the University's image.

Since Valdosta State University and the University System of Georgia do not have a dress code policy in the place, individual divisions or academic departments are responsible for setting guidelines on dress attire in the workplace. Supervisors have the responsibility to share their expectations for appearance to all their employees. Supervisors have the right to identify incidents where employees are inappropriately dressed and take appropriate disciplinary actions.

PROCEDURES:

1. Department supervisors are responsible for establishing and communicating dress expectations appropriate for their operational needs, work environment, safety requirements, and the professional image of the University.
2. Employees are expected to comply with their department's established dress expectations and maintain a professional appearance appropriate for their job duties and responsibilities.
3. Employees whose positions require uniforms, personal protective equipment (PPE), or other specialized attire must wear the required clothing while performing assigned duties.
4. Employees who have questions regarding appropriate attire should consult their supervisor before reporting to work in questionable attire.
5. Employees are encouraged to participate in Blazer Friday by wearing official Valdosta State University apparel or University colors. Participation is subject to departmental dress expectations. Employees whose positions require uniforms, safety attire, personal protective equipment (PPE), or business professional attire must continue to comply with those requirements unless otherwise approved by their supervisor.

Outside Employment Activities

Reference: HRAP 04.02 Conflicts of Interest, Conflicts of Commitment and Outside Activities

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The purpose of policy is to provide additional guidance to USG employees regarding BOR 8.2.18.2 to include the approval process for compensated outside activities and the disclosure of conflicts of interest, conflicts of commitment, and outside activities. An employee shall make every reasonable effort to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. An appearance of conflict exists when a reasonable person will conclude from the circumstances that an employee's ability to protect the public interest, or perform public duties, is compromised by personal interest. An appearance of conflict can exist even in the absence of a legal conflict of interest.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Employees seeking approval to engage in outside employment or professional practice must:**

- **Complete the Online Form**
  - Access the Outside Employment/Consulting Request Form online here.
  - Complete all required sections accurately.
- **Print and Submit**
  - Print the completed form.
  - Submit the form to your direct supervisor at least 30 days before the planned activity start date.
- **Obtain Department and Administrative Approval**
  - Your Department Head and Dean or Director must review and approve the request.
  - The request is then forwarded to the appropriate Vice President or Provost for approval.
  - Forward signed form to Outside Activities Committee at outsideactivity@valdosta.edu.
  - A Review Committee will also evaluate the request as necessary.
- **Maintain Record Keeping**
  - Copies of all approved requests are maintained in:
    - The employee's department file
    - The employee's personnel file in the Office of HR/EOD
- **Understand Exceptions – Do Not Use This Form for:**
  - Non-consulting jobs performed outside normal work hours where primary University skills are not required (e.g., second job at night or weekends).
  - Requests to teach through eCore.
  - Requests to work for another USG institution (follow the USG Dual Appointment Process instead).

Workplace Conflicts & Dispute Resolution

Reference: HRAP 04.04 Dispute Resolution

POLICY AT A GLANCE: In the day-to-day operation of any office or department, problems and misunderstandings may occur. If left unresolved, serious personnel problems might result. While consideration, cooperation, and common sense can resolve most of these situations, a few require special attention. It is the policy of the University to resolve disputes fairly, and at the lowest possible level.

PROCEDURES FOR EMPLOYEES:

1. **Employee-to-Employee Conflict**
   - Attempt to resolve the issue directly with the other employee.
   - If resolution is not possible, contact your supervisor or HR/EOD for support and guidance.

2. **Employee-to-Student Conflict**
   - Contact the Student Conduct Office to report and address the issue.

3. **Employee-to-Supervisor Conflict**
   - Make every reasonable effort to resolve concerns through open and respectful communication with your supervisor.
   - If the issue cannot be resolved or concerns remain, promptly elevate the matter to the next level of supervision or contact HR/EOD for guidance and assistance.
   - If you believe that the work-related instructions are unlawful, violate University or Board of Regents policy, or create a significant health or safety risk, contact HR/EOD for guidance.

Grievance Policy

Reference: HRAP 04.07 Grievance Policy

POLICY AT A GLANCE: The University System of Georgia is committed to providing a good working environment for its faculty and staff. It is the policy of the University System of Georgia to resolve these disputes fairly, and at the lowest possible level. When conflicts or disagreements occur, employees should first attempt to resolve them through discussion with their supervisor. Attempted resolution may be addressed through the Grievance/Disciplinary Review Process, if applicable.

A grievance or disciplinary review will be available to handle claims that a person has been harmed by any action that violates the policies of either the institution or the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia ("the Board of Regents") or for requested disciplinary review pursuant to the University System policy, entitled Dismissal, Demotion or Suspension.

PROCEDURES:

1. **Determine Whether the Matter Is Eligible for Review**

   An employee may file a grievance alleging that an employment action or decision violated an institutional or Board of Regents policy. An employee may also request a disciplinary review after:

   - Suspension
   - Discharge
   - Demotion
   - Salary reduction

   The grievance or disciplinary review process is generally not available when:

   - The employee was discharged during the provisional period.
   - The action resulted from a reorganization, program modification, or financial exigency. The employee may instead request review by the Board of Regents, when permitted.
   - The matter involves discrimination, harassment, or retaliation covered by another institutional process. Such concerns should be reported to HR/EOD.
   - The matter has already been reviewed through an applicable institutional administrative process.

   Employees who are unsure whether a matter is eligible may contact HR/EOD for guidance.

2. **Attempt Informal Resolution, When Appropriate**

   Before filing a grievance, employees should attempt to resolve the concern with their immediate supervisor or the next appropriate level of management when practical.

   Informal resolution is not required when:

   - The concern involves the employee's supervisor.
   - The matter involves suspension, discharge, demotion, or salary reduction.
   - Attempting informal resolution would be inappropriate under the circumstances.
   - The filing deadline could expire before informal efforts are completed.

   Attempts at informal resolution do not extend the applicable filing deadline unless HR/EOD confirms an extension in writing.

3. **File the Grievance in Writing**
   A grievance or request for disciplinary review must be submitted in writing to the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO). No specific form is required.
   The written grievance should include:
   - The employee's name, job title, department, and contact information.
   - The employment action, decision, or conduct being challenged.
   - The date the employee received notice of the action or became aware of the concern.
   - The institutional or Board of Regents policy believed to have been violated, if known.
   - A clear explanation of the relevant facts and circumstances.
   - The names of individuals who may have relevant information.
   - Copies of any supporting documents.
   - A description of any efforts made to resolve the matter informally.
   - The specific remedy or resolution requested.
   - The employee's signature and the date submitted.

   Not knowing the specific policy involved does not prevent an employee from filing a grievance. The employee should describe the concern and provide enough information for HR/EOD to evaluate it.

4. **Meet the Filing Deadline**
   A request for disciplinary review involving suspension, discharge, demotion, or salary reduction must be filed within ten working days after the employee receives notice of the action.

   If a grievance is submitted after the applicable deadline, the employee must include a written explanation for the delay. The CHRO will determine whether good cause exists to accept the late filing.

5. **Initial Review by HR/EOD**
   The CHRO or designee will review the submission to determine whether:
   - It was filed within the applicable deadline.
   - The matter is eligible for consideration under this process.
   - Sufficient information has been provided.
   - Another institutional procedure is more appropriate.
   - Additional information or clarification is needed.

   HR/EOD will notify the employee whether the grievance has been accepted, referred to another process, returned for additional information, or determined to be ineligible.

6. **Review and Hearing Process**
   If an eligible request for disciplinary review is accepted, the employee will be provided an opportunity for review by a Board of Review in accordance with applicable institutional and Board of Regents procedures.

   The hearing may occur before or after the effective date of the personnel action being challenged. HR/EOD will provide the employee with information regarding the hearing process, applicable deadlines, and any additional requirements.

Investigations

Reference: HRAP 04.03 Cooperation in Internal Investigations

POLICY AT A GLANCE: Employees of the University System of Georgia must fully cooperate with any internal investigation authorized by the institution's President and conducted by designated investigators. Internal investigations will be conducted only by those authorized by the President or designated leadership. The investigator must ensure that the process protects due process rights and is conducted in the best interest of the institution. Information related to the investigation will be shared only with appropriate administrators or individuals with a legitimate need to know.

PROCEDURES:

1. Cooperate Fully

- Participate in interviews, meetings, and other investigative activities when directed by an authorized investigator.
- Provide requested information and materials within the timeframe established by the investigator.
- Failure to cooperate without a legitimate reason may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

2. Protect the Integrity of the Investigation

- Employees are expected not to interfere with the investigation, influence the statements of others, coordinate responses, intimidate or retaliate against participants, conceal or destroy evidence, or otherwise obstruct the process.
- Employees are encouraged to use professional discretion when discussing an ongoing investigation to protect the privacy of those involved and the integrity of the process.
- Nothing in this procedure prohibits an employee from discussing workplace concerns, seeking advice or support, reporting possible misconduct, participating in a protected activity, or exercising any right provided by law or University System of Georgia policy.

3. Respond to Notification

- The investigator will notify you of allegations involving you when appropriate and provide sufficient information for you to respond.
- The timing and level of detail provided may vary based on the circumstances, including the need to preserve evidence, protect participants, or avoid compromising the investigation.
- Respond promptly and within any reasonable deadline established by the investigator. If additional time is needed, contact the investigator as soon as possible.

4. Present Your Position

- You will have a reasonable opportunity to explain your position and respond to the matters under review.
- Provide all relevant facts, documents, witness information, and other evidence available to you.
- Additional meetings may be scheduled if clarification or follow-up information is needed.

5. Be Honest and Accurate

- Provide truthful, complete, and accurate information to the best of your knowledge.
- If you later realize that information you provided was incomplete or inaccurate, notify the investigator promptly.
- Knowingly providing false information, concealing material information, or withholding relevant evidence may result in disciplinary action.

6. Follow Reasonable Investigative Instructions

- Comply with reasonable requests for documents, records, interviews, meetings, and preservation of relevant information.
- Do not alter, delete, conceal, or destroy records or other information that may be relevant to the investigation.
- Ask the investigator or HR/EOD for clarification if you do not understand a request or believe it may conflict with a legal right, policy, or other obligation.

7. Witnesses and Other Participants

- Witnesses and other participants are expected to provide factual, objective, and complete information.
- Employees should use professional discretion and respect the privacy of others while the investigation is pending.
- Employees may discuss the matter or seek assistance as permitted by law and policy, but they must not retaliate against participants, pressure others regarding their statements, coordinate testimony, or interfere with the investigation.
- Participants may be asked to attend additional interviews or provide supplemental information.

8. Nonretaliation

- Retaliation against anyone who makes a good-faith report, participates in an investigation, provides information, or exercises a protected right is prohibited.
- Concerns about retaliation, intimidation, or interference should be reported promptly to HR/EOD or another appropriate University official.

9. Await the Outcome

- The investigator will gather and evaluate relevant facts and evidence before reaching findings or providing an investigative report.
- Findings will be shared with appropriate administrators and others who have a legitimate institutional need to know.
- The appropriate administrator will determine what follow-up or corrective action, if any, is warranted.
- Participants may not receive every detail about the findings or actions involving another employee because of privacy and personnel considerations.

10. Ask for Support or Clarification

- Contact HR/EOD for information about the investigative process, applicable rights and responsibilities, available support resources, or clarification of a request.
- Employees may also seek advice, representation, or other assistance available to them under applicable law or University System of Georgia policy.