

Guidance on office etiquette

*This document is provided to share good practice and support good working and personal relationships, particularly in shared spaces, across campus. Managers are encouraged to adapt it at a local level to suit the requirements of their department.

1. Communication

1.1 Email

Email signatures: You should have a clear email signature, containing the following information: Job title, address, email, phone number, and Department/Faculty web address). You may wish to add other useful work-related information to your signature.

Out of Office notification: In order to give others an idea about when they might receive a response, you should leave an out of office message if you are likely to be out of the office for more than one day, via <http://www.bath.ac.uk/bucs/email/>. The message should include the date of your return, and details of who to contact in your absence.

1.2 Telephone

Answering the phone: We wish to project a professional and welcoming first impression to callers. Please answer the phone with a friendly and consistent salutation: e.g. 'Faculty/ Department of XXX, (your name)' so staff and students instantly recognise that they are speaking with a member of the team they are trying to reach.

Voicemail: Although we should be making every effort to answer telephones during working hours (including one another's in shared offices), it is not always possible and a clear voicemail message provides a helpful, friendly opportunity for a message to be left rather than having callers frustrated at a never ending series of rings. Email telephone@bath.ac.uk to set voicemail up if you have not got this facility already.

General Courtesy: As a matter of professional courtesy for other staff, you are expected to:

- Promptly answer any telephone in the office when it is ringing;
- Ensure that messages taken for others are delivered promptly (ideally by email) providing accurate information about the caller;
- Have consideration for people talking on the telephone by keeping conversations as quiet as possible;
- Ensure that any personal calls received are kept short and to a minimum. Calls to the doctor, dentist or emergency calls may be made on the office phone.

Personal Mobile

- If you need to make any other type of personal call, you should if possible use your own mobile and remove yourself from the office for as brief a time as possible. It is not permissible to carry out personal business when students or academic or other staff are in the office;
- Keep personal texting to an absolute minimum, except on breaks, as this is distracting to you and

Guidance on office etiquette

other members of staff.

- Turn off your personal mobile or set it to silent or vibrate.

1.3 Tact and Diplomacy

Overhearing conversations: Should you accidentally overhear a conversation that you know was intended to remain private between the people having the conversation, simply forget about its contents.

Informal meetings: Likewise, should some of your colleagues be holding an informal meeting, don't just waltz up and join in. If you haven't been invited, ask yourself if you really need to be there.

2. Open plan offices

Many offices and workspaces these days tend to be 'open plan' in nature which within them, might also include teams working in cubicles or 'pods' as they are sometimes referred to. Whilst, for the most part, groups of workers adapt well and are able to get along fine, it's important to remember that consideration and respect for others is essential in order to make this arrangement function efficiently. Many people who work in open plan offices report that close proximity to work colleagues can often provide a social aspect to their work in addition to the benefits for the job itself. Nevertheless, the guidelines below outline the issues you should consider if you want your open plan office or workspace to be as productive and as harmonious as possible.

Showing consideration to colleagues in an open plan office will only work if you all adopt a mutual respect for each other.

2.1 Desk/Local Area

- Allow yourself to be accessible to others but adopt clearly understood signals for when you're busy and don't wish to be disturbed.
- Keep your desk tidy. This is especially important if you are sharing an open plan desk and show courtesy when using any shared spaces.
- Personalisation of your desk is fine, but do take into account those working around you to ensure the appearance, effectiveness and safety of the space is not compromised.
- You are encouraged to maintain storage and filing within agreed allocations and to regularly purge, re-cycle and/or archive material. All shared working areas should be cleared after use for the benefits of others.
- Coffee breaks may be taken at your desk.
- Pungent or bad odours are one of the most complained about aspects of working in an open plan office so it is important to consider the impact on colleagues of your decisions – e.g. avoid eating messy or strong smelling food in office spaces.
- Our scheduled breaks are good for us and, therefore, staff are encouraged to get away from their PC and desk during their lunch break.
- You are also asked to wash / clear up in the kitchen /coffee areas.

(See also para 1.3, tact and diplomacy, above.)

Guidance on office etiquette

2.2 Distractions

- Be careful when having conversations. Don't speak too loudly in shared workspaces as you may be interrupting a fellow worker from getting on with their work.
- Never shout to a colleague who's at a workstation several feet away to attract their attention.
- Even within open plan workspaces, there will be designated aisles or walking routes to use. Use them and don't be tempted to take short cuts across other people's 'patches'. Never use anything which might cause disruption to others, e.g. a speaker phone or radio unless you've got express permission from fellow work colleagues that this is acceptable.
- You should avoid speaking openly about any issues of confidentiality.
- If you do feel that someone is being unnecessarily noisy it is acceptable to ask them politely to quieten down. It is best handled in this way initially, rather than referring it to a manager, which may exacerbate the situation. (If however, it continues, do consult your manager.)

3. General

3.1 IT use

- Personal use of IT facilities should be undertaken only during unpaid breaks. This includes the use of any software and web based pages which have no direct relevance to your role.
- You should safeguard confidentiality and data protection by locking your screen when away from your desk (even briefly).
- Ensure that all key work documents created are backed up on a shared network drive so that they can be retrieved in your absence.

3.2 Electronic Calendar

- In order to organise meetings as easily as possible everyone is expected to use the University provided electronic calendar and keep it fully up to date so others can rely on this as an accurate source of information regarding your whereabouts and availability.
- It is also helpful to enter your approved annual leave as 'daily notes' in the calendar of your line manager.

3.3 Bringing Children into work

It is not appropriate to bring children into the workplace unless you have explicit permission from your line manager. Alternative childcare arrangements should be made in the interest of both the children and colleagues.

In general, it's quite easy to get along well in an open plan working environment. What you should always be thinking about is being accessible to people wherever possible, but still maintaining boundaries whenever you need to focus on work and showing consideration to others by being tidy and courteous. Remembering that not everybody will share exactly the same values as you is important but, in general, adopting a policy of treating people in the way you'd like to be treated yourself is usually a good benchmark to ensure a harmonious workspace.