

Frequently asked questions regarding WOU extended leave and furlough programs

Useful definitions before reviewing this Q &A:

Extended Leave Program – Employees moved to leave without pay (LWOP) for 06/01/2020 – 08/31/2020

Furloughed Employee – Classified employees reduced to .8 FTE from 06/01/2020 to 08/31/2020. Unclassified employees reduced to .8 FTE from 06/01/2020 to 07/31/2020. (Maximum of 32 hours per week)

Work Share Program – Employees who are furloughed and have been employed full-time for at least six months or part-time for at least a year before the start of the plan. *NOTE: Some furloughed employees may not be eligible for the Work Share Program and would need to apply for UI benefits on their own.*

1. Q : Can employees use vacation, sick, comp time, other accrued time to cover furlough days?

A: No, the furlough day is 8 hours of leave without pay (LWOP).

2. Q: Will I fill out the furlough days as leave without pay on my time record?

A: Yes, employees should indicate their furlough day as 8 hours of leave without pay on their time records.

3. Q: Can I use accrued leave during my non-furlough days?

A: You may use accrued leave on a day that is not designated as furlough. However, if you use accrued leave on a non-furlough day then you will not be eligible for UI benefits for that week (including the \$600 Federal benefit). The Oregon Work Share program requires that you work all available hours your employer has available that week.

4. Q: Will this change affect the EFMLEA? If so, how?

A: Those with a qualifying reason to take EFMLEA or FMLA would be eligible under a 32-hour work week. Those employees may utilize accrued leave for their applicable EFMLEA or FMLA hours. Employees on extended leave will not be eligible for EFMLEA or FMLA. We are seeking clarification from OED regarding if you may use accrued leave if you are part of the Work Share Program and on approved FMLA/EFMLEA medical leave.

5. Q: How will vacation/sick leave accrue for those working .8 FTE?

*A: Vacation and Sick leave will accrue at .8 FTE instead of 1.0 FTE
Example: Vacation: 15 hours x .8 FTE = 12 hours | Sick: 8 hours x .8 FTE = 6.4 hours*

6. Q: How will PERS/ORP contributions be impacted?

A: These will be calculated based on .80 FTE not 1.0 FTE. Employees on the Extended Leave program will not receive contributions while they are on LWOP.

7. **Q: Is the best mechanism for employees to offset potential reductions in PERS/ORP the TDI?**

A: You should speak with your financial advisor or accountant.

8. **Q: The furlough notice stated that we could not work more than 32 hours a week while on furlough. Then later in the notice it says we are not allowed to work on our furlough day. Do you know if we are required to take a day off each week or if we could spread the hours throughout the week (e.g. take two half days)?**

A: Furloughed employees should work with their supervisor to determine their schedule for your 32-hour work week.

9. **Q: Will our benefits (insurance) remain the same?**

A: For furloughed employees insurance benefits will remain the same.

For employees who are on the extended leave program, your 3/5% employee premium will be paid for you during your extended leave. You will remain responsible for paying your optional benefits. You may choose to unenroll from your optional benefits, but there may be wait period or other consequences upon adding these benefits back to your plan at a later date. You will receive information in the coming weeks from HR regarding how to pay for your optional benefit premiums or unenroll.

10. **Q: If staff already had vacation planned during this period of furlough, can they use vacation time to cover any and all time already planned?**

A: Furloughed employees must only work/be in paid status for 32 hours in a work week. If you had a work week with already planned vacation days, one of the days in that week would need to be a furlough LWOP day. If you utilize vacation time during a week of furlough you are not eligible for UI benefits that week.

11. **Q: Is it up to each department to set their furlough schedule? For instance, is there an option to say that we would like to close on Friday?**

A: At this time, it is recommended that departments coordinate schedules based on the needs of the unit, ensuring the best support to the University possible. Friday's have traditionally been a quieter day during the summer, therefore this could be a viable option for your unit and you should check with your Vice President or Executive Director.

12. **Q: Can we spread our furlough 8 hours over the work week?**

A: Yes, but this is not recommended. Again, please work with your supervisor to determine your work schedule.

13. **Q: When will the university have clarity on whether employees will be eligible for Oregon Work Share and the CARE Act Federal Benefit (\$600/wk.) and what the benefit amounts might be?**

A: The University is actively working on submitting our Work Share Application with the employment department. As soon as we have details they will be emailed to impacted employees. It is our understanding that employees eligible for Unemployment Insurance benefits will additionally be eligible for the CARE Act Federal benefit through the week ending 7/25/2020.

14. Q: Is the University aware of the benefits calculator on the OR Work Share website?

A: Yes, this is a very good resource. [Oregon Unemployment Insurance Estimator]. We encourage employees to utilize it keeping in mind furloughed employees are eligible for 1/5 benefit since they will be receiving 4/5 pay from WOU.

15. Q: Who will be contacting the staff who have reduced work hours about the Workshare program?

A: Heather Mercer will be coordinating the Oregon Work Share program for the University. Emails will be sent to impacted employees

16. Q: As a furloughed employee does the Work Share program contact us to fill out an online form? Or do we go online to fill out their form now?

*A: The University has filed an Application to be a part of the Oregon Work Share Program and will fill out the Participant List and Weekly Claim form on the employee's behalf. Employees will be required to fill out an Initial Claim Form. **DO NOT email us this form it has your personally identifiable information on it.** We are working with UCS to find the best solution to collect these forms electronically from employees to batch send to Oregon Employment Department (OED).*

17. Q: Should layoffs occur after the furlough period; will unemployment benefits start at that time? Also, how does the wait week work under the Work Share Program.

A: You should contact the [Oregon Employment Department](#) with questions regarding the calculation of your UI benefits.

18. Q: Do employees on the extended leave program need to do anything to receive unemployment? What about if I am not eligible for the Work Share Program.

A: Yes. Employees on extended leave must apply for unemployment insurance on their own.

19. Q: What is work week?

A: A work week is considered Sunday to Saturday. Ex. June 7- June 13, 2020 is a work week. Furloughed employees who may need to work Saturday June 13 for commencement would need to be mindful of maintaining a 32-hour work week.

20. Q: How do employees on extended leave pay their benefits?

A: We will be sending a “self-pay” form to employees.

21. Q: When will I get paid?

A: May paychecks for your regular 1.0 FTE salary will be distributed on the normal schedule. (May payday is Friday, May 29, 2020.) For those on furlough June and July paychecks with the reduced hours (.8 FTE) will be distributed on their normal schedule. June payday is Tuesday, June 30, 2020. July payday is Friday, July 31, 2020, August payday is Monday, August 31, 2020.

22. Q: Will 9-month employees whose benefits are normally tripled still be tripled if they are on the extended leave program? If so, how will the university pay the 3/5% employee share?

A: We are looking into the best way to handle benefit deductions for 9-month employees. As soon as we have information it will be communicated.

23. Q: What happens to our personal leave (classified employees) if we do not use it by 5/31/2020?

A: If you do not use your personal leave by 06/30/2020 it will be lost. If you use it during any week of June, you will not be eligible for UI benefits for the week(s) you utilize personal leave time.

24. Q: What happens if we max out our vacation time while on the furlough program/work share?

A: This question is an item of discussion, we will update a response as soon as we make that determination.

25. Q: How does it work when the university brings employees back by seniority? Is it by classification and seniority or just seniority?

A: The University will bring employees back by classification and seniority.

26. Q: Normally when you go on unemployment you have to show that you are applying for jobs. If you are LWOP do you still have to do this? Since you are technically considered an employee here.

A: Due to COVID-19 the requirement to look for other work has been suspended.

27. Q: When will I receive my UI benefits? Will they be delayed?

A: We do not have control over OED and the timeliness of claims. You should contact the [Oregon Employment Department](#) if you have questions about your UI Benefits.

28. Q: In terms of enrollment in optional insurances and Long-Term Care, does a furlough constitute a "life change event"? Can a furloughed employee make changes to their elections?

A: No, a furlough of .2 FTE would not constitute as a qualifying “mid-year change” to be eligible to change benefit

elections. Only employees being moved to the Extended Leave Program are eligible to change their benefit elections under the temporary PEBB rule.

29. Q: How will the July 4th holiday and work week be treated?

A: The use of holiday pay does not impact UI benefits. This is a day deemed as no work available by WOU. Vacation time used around the Jul 4th holiday would impact UI benefits. You will still need to take a furlough day (8 hours of LWOP) during that week.

30. Q: Can I check personal emails sent to my WOU email on my furlough day?

A: You may check personal emails, but you should not open or respond to any work-related emails during your furlough day.

31. Q: Can we have the taxes on the \$600 federal benefit withheld from our WOU paycheck?

A: No. We do not have an avenue for taxes to be withheld from your WOU paycheck for the UI benefit. You should contact the Oregon Employment Department and your tax professional regarding the tax implications of this benefit.

32. Q: How would my short-term disability be calculated should I become disabled while furloughed?

A: For employees who are furloughed or experience a reduction in work hours because of COVID-19 and later become disabled, The Standard will look at earnings on the last day of work prior to the furlough or reduction in hours to determine pre-disability earnings.

33. Q: What date should I put for “BYE”/ “Benefit year ending date” on the Authorization for Electronic Deposit and Tax Liability Unemployment Insurance forms.

A: It is our understanding that you should leave BYE blank on these forms.

34. Q: Why aren't we closing campus on Fridays?

A: The University took all factors into consideration when deciding not to close campus on a specific day of the week for furlough; online classes are held on Fridays; some offices have service needs to remain open. Departments should consider staggering their workforce to maintain appropriate social distancing.

35. Q: May I start the furlough program early?

A: With agreement from your supervisor you may begin furlough early. However, you would not be eligible to be a part of the Work Share Program early. You would need to file for UI benefits on your own. It is unclear at this time if you would be eligible to join the Work Share Program later.

36. Q: May I go on the Extended Leave program early?

A: Yes, with agreement from your supervisor, you may begin the Extended Leave Program early.

37. Q: How will I receive my UI benefits?

A: You may receive your UI benefits via a paper check or direct deposit. If you are interested in setting up direct deposit you will need to fill out an [Authorization for Electronic Deposit Form](#).

38. Q: May I still use my tuition discount if I am furloughed or on the extended leave program?

A: Yes. It has been determined that your position remains at .5 FTE, thus as long as your position is .5 FTE or higher on the first day of the term you would remain eligible, being on leave from that position does not exclude you from the use of the benefit.

39. Q: If I am furloughed how will my eligibility for the Federal Loan Forgiveness Program be impacted?

A: At this time, your eligibility should remain the same. Full-time means working for one or more qualifying employers for the greater of (1) An annual average of at least 30 hours per week, for a contractual or employment period of at least 8 months, an average of 30 hours per week; or (2) Unless the qualifying employment is with two or more employers, the number of hours the employer considers full time.

40. Q: Are grant funded employees being furloughed?

A: At this time most grant funded positions have not been notified of furlough.

41. Q: Will there be a timeline for supervisors to do the reporting for the Work Share program?

A: Yes. As soon as we determine the best way to collect information from supervisors this will be communicated with instructions.

42. Q: How many hours are students allowed to work this summer?

A: Students should work no more than 32 hours per week and should not be performing the work of a classified staff position.

43. Q: Can we change our prior comp time used to vacation time?

A: This is being discussed. If a determination is made it will be communicated to classified employees.

44. Q: Will our leave accruals be able to go over the current limits?

A: This is being discussed. As soon as there is any determination regarding flexibility of current limits it will be communicated.

45. Q: What forms are required for employees on Work Share?

*A: Employees on Work Share will need to complete an [Initial Claim Form](#) and may wish to fill out a [Authorization for Electronic Deposit](#) and/or [Tax Liability Unemployment Insurance](#). More information will be coming regarding how to securely upload these forms to HR. **DO NOT EMAIL** forms as they contain your personally identifiable information.*

46. Q: Do I indicate WOU as my “First Most Recent Employer”?

A: Yes, and you should use your initial hire date (excluding student employment) as when you “worked for this employer” and check “Still Working”

47. Q: What do I put for the “Total (gross) earnings in the above work period of work”?

A: Total gross earnings should be for the last 18-months. To calculate this, you should reference your earning statements in Wolf Web. They would like 2 years of job history and 18-months of salary history.

48. Q: What should I use for “Rate of Pay”?

A: You should use your current monthly or hourly rate. Be sure to check the corresponding box underneath.

49. Q: How do I provide a voided check for the Authorization for Direct Deposit form?

A: You may upload a copy of your voided check to the secure system using the “Authorization for Direct Deposit” option.

50. Q: Can I take Sunday May 31 as a furlough day?

A: No. You should take your furlough days beginning in June.

51. Q: How can I find my start date?

A: Employees can view their current and past job history in Wolf Web under "Employee Menu" > "Current and Past Jobs".