

Working hours and rest policy

Policy | WRK-POL-004

Document type	Policy
Title	Working hours and rest policy
Document ID	{{facility.code}}-WRK-POL-004
Version and status	1.0 Draft, for ASF Expert Committee approval
Prepared by	{{roles.quality_lead.name}}, Quality lead
Reviewed by	{{roles.clinical_director.name}}, Clinical director Date: _____
Approver and signature	{{roles.clinical_director.name}}, Clinical director Signature: _____ Date: _____
Effective date	{{document.effective_date}}
Next review	{{document.review_date}} (12 months, or sooner after any incident or change)
Replaces	None (new document)
Standards and criteria supported	Standard 2E, criterion 2E.9
Evidence basis	E-006, E-009
Status of this document	Recommended best-practice model. A hospital may adopt, adapt or replace it with an equivalent that meets the same criteria.

At a glance: what to do

1. Maximum working hours and minimum rest are set in writing for every role.
2. Rotas are checked against these limits before they are published.
3. Any excess is reported the same week and reviewed.
4. Staff are never asked to work beyond safe limits to cover a gap without a recorded decision.

Stop and get help straight away if: a staff member is working beyond the maximum hours with no recorded decision.

1. Purpose

To set working hours and rest so that staff can work safely, and to make excess visible and reviewed [EC].

2. Scope

Applies to	All workforce members, including locums and bank staff
Locations	All services
When	Always; limits checked for every rota
Does not apply to	Voluntary extra shifts within the limits

3. Definitions and abbreviations

Term	Meaning in this SOP
Maximum hours	The longest working time allowed in a set period, as set in the policy
Minimum rest	The rest period required between shifts, as set in the policy
Excess	Hours or rest beyond or below the set limits

4. Background and rationale

Fatigue increases error and harm to patients and to staff. Written limits and checked rotas are the basic protection.

5. Responsibilities

Role	Duties in this SOP	Competence needed
Chief executive	Approves the limits	Executive
Rota managers	Build rotas within the limits and check them before publishing	Management
Staff member	Reports fatigue and excess hours	Own role

6. Equipment, materials and resources

Item	Specification or standard	Check before use
Rota and working hours log (WRK-REG-004)	Current	Updated each week

7. Safety and infection prevention

- A staff member who is too tired to work safely must not start or continue a shift. This is never a disciplinary matter.

8. Before you start

- Confirm the maximum hours and minimum rest for each role are set and approved.

9. Procedure

Follow the steps in order. Where a step says "If", take the action for the case that applies. Do not skip a step. If a step cannot be done, use section 11 and section 12.

Step	Action	How to do it	Key point
1	Set the limits.	- Set maximum hours and minimum rest for each role. - Publish them to all staff in writing.	A limit that is not written cannot be checked.
2	Build and check the rota.	- Check each rota against the limits before publishing. - Record the check in WRK-REG-004.	Check before, not after.
3	Record and report any excess.	- Record each excess with the reason, the person and the time. - Report it to the rota manager the same week.	Excess is recorded whether or not it is agreed.
4	Review.	- Review each excess at the monthly meeting. - Change the rota or the staffing where a pattern is found.	A pattern means the staffing is wrong, not the people.

Decision points

- Where cover cannot be found within the limits, the clinical director decides and records the decision, the hours and the review date.

10. Special situations

Situation	What to do
Emergency	Extra hours are allowed for a set time, with a recorded decision and a rest period afterwards.

11. Problems and escalation

- Any shift beyond the maximum without a recorded decision is reported to the chief executive the same day.

12. Monitoring and compliance

What is checked	Target	How often	Who	If the target is missed
Rotas checked before publishing	100%	Weekly	Rota managers	Escalate to clinical director
Excess recorded with reason	100%	Monthly	Rota managers	Escalate to chief executive
Rest periods respected	At least 70%	Monthly	Rota managers	Review rota

13. Records

Record	Where it is kept	Kept for
WRK-REG-004 Rota and working hours log	Rota office	3 years

14. Training and competence

- Rota managers are trained in the limits and in recording excess at appointment.

15. Related documents

ID	Title	Relationship
WRK-REG-004	Rota and working hours log	Record used in step 2
WRK-POL-003	Occupational health, safety and wellbeing policy	Health and safety policy

16. Evidence

ID	Source and status
E-006	ASF Policy Framework v1.2. Adapted.
E-009	ASF Expert Committee consensus. Limits set by the ASF Expert Committee by the Committee and by national law.

EC = ASF Expert Committee consensus. Items marked EC are reviewed by the Committee each year.

17. Change history

Version	Date	What changed	Approver and signature
1.0	{{document.effective_date}}	First version	Pending Expert Committee approval