STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Leave Request SOP

Document no.	SOP-HR-003
Revision	1.0
Owner	HR Manager
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To process leave requests fairly and consistently, keep accurate leave balances, and make sure coverage is planned before time off is approved.

2. Scope

Applies to vacation, sick leave, personal leave and other paid or unpaid leave requested through the standard process. Extended or protected leave is handled with HR and legal counsel under company policy and local law.

Definitions

Leave balance	The amount of paid leave an employee has accrued and available to use, tracked in the HRIS.
Blackout period	A period set by the business when leave requests are limited or need additional approval due to workload.
Protected leave	Leave that may carry additional legal protections, such as extended medical or family leave, handled per company policy and local law.

3. Responsibilities

Employee	Submits leave requests with enough notice and arranges handover of urgent work.
Manager	Reviews requests for coverage, approves or declines within policy, and plans around approved absences.
HR Generalist	Maintains leave policy and balances, reviews unusual or protected leave requests, and keeps records accurate.
Payroll Specialist	Applies approved leave to payroll and confirms paid or unpaid status is processed correctly.

RACI matrix

Activity	Employee	Manager	HR Generalist	Payroll Specialist
Submit leave request	R/A	I	-	-
Review coverage and approve request	C	R/A	C	-
Review protected or extended leave	C	C	R/A	I

Activity	Employee	Manager	HR Generalist	Payroll Specialist
Update leave balance and process pay	I	I	C	R/A
Confirm return to work	R	R/A	C	-

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- HRIS with leave request module
- Leave request form
- Leave policy and entitlement schedule
- Team coverage calendar
- Payroll system

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Submit the leave request** The employee submits a leave request in the HRIS with the dates, leave type and any handover notes, following the notice period set in the leave policy.	Employee	☐
5.2	**Check the leave balance** The HRIS checks the employee's available balance for the requested leave type automatically and flags the request if the balance is insufficient. **Checkpoint:** The request shows a sufficient balance or a note explaining unpaid or advanced leave before it goes to the manager.	HR Generalist	☐
5.3	**Review team coverage** The manager checks the team coverage calendar for overlapping absences, blackout periods or critical deadlines during the requested dates.	Manager	☐
5.4	**Approve or decline the request** The manager approves or declines the request in the HRIS within the timeframe set by policy, adding a reason if the request is declined or needs different dates. **Checkpoint:** Declines include a clear business reason and, where possible, alternative dates.	Manager	☐
5.5	**Escalate protected or extended leave** If the request involves extended medical, family or other protected leave, the manager routes it to HR, which reviews it with legal counsel where needed and follows company policy and local law. **Warning:** Handle medical details as confidential and share them only with people who need them to process the leave.	HR Generalist	☐
5.6	**Confirm the approved leave** Once approved, the HRIS notifies the employee and updates the team coverage calendar and the employee's leave balance automatically.	HR Generalist	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.7	**Arrange coverage** The manager confirms who covers the employee's urgent responsibilities during the absence and shares the plan with the team before the leave starts.	Manager	☐
5.8	**Process leave in payroll** The payroll specialist applies the approved leave to the relevant pay period, marking it paid or unpaid according to policy and the employee's remaining balance.	Payroll Specialist	☐
5.9	**Confirm return to work** On the employee's return, the manager confirms the return date in the HRIS and checks in on any handover items that need to be picked back up.	Manager	☐
5.10	**Review balances and exceptions** The HR generalist runs a periodic report on leave balances and unusual patterns, such as repeated short-notice requests, and follows up with the relevant manager.	HR Generalist	☐

6. Quality checks

- Every approved or declined request has a manager decision recorded in the HRIS.
- Leave balances in the HRIS match payroll records at the end of each pay period.
- Protected leave requests are reviewed by HR, not approved by the manager alone.
- Coverage plans exist for every approved absence longer than two days.

7. Records

- Leave request and approval history in the HRIS
- Leave balance report
- Coverage plan for extended absences
- Protected leave correspondence, filed separately from the general personnel file

8. KPIs

- Average time to approve a leave request
- Percentage of requests submitted within the notice period
- Unplanned absence rate
- Leave balance accuracy at pay period close

9. Common mistakes

- Approving leave without checking the coverage calendar.
- Letting protected leave requests sit with the manager instead of routing them to HR.
- Forgetting to update the leave balance after an approval.
- Discussing an employee's medical details outside of HR.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Alexa Uskova

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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