



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

**Faculty of Natural Resources and
Agricultural Sciences**

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Availability and email etiquette at the NJ Faculty

Purpose and target group

The purpose of this document is to present the faculty management team's thoughts on staff availability and email etiquette, as well as a basis for personal reflection.

A healthy attitude to today's technological work tools reduces stress among employees and improves the working environment.

Managers have a particular responsibility and must set a good example.

Summary

New technology does not mean that staff members are expected to be constantly available, but allows for greater flexibility and higher expectations as to when colleagues are available. Increased flexibility makes it easier to reconcile work and private life, but increased availability using new technology can also lead to an increased workload. During certain periods, a higher workload can be acceptable, but the situation must not become permanent. Flexibility also makes it even more important to inform our colleagues about when we are available and when we are not.

If someone chooses, in consultation with their manager, to occasionally work evenings and weekends, this does not mean that colleagues can be expected to be available as well. New communication tools make instant communication possible, but can also prevent recovery and cause considerable stress. Emailing colleagues late at night, for example, sends signals in addition to what is communicated in the message.

It is therefore important that the employer

- makes it clear that employees are not expected to be available at all times – you should switch off your email/phone when you are on sick leave; on holiday or just want to be offline;
- clarifies that teachers are not expected to be available to students outside normal working hours;
- clarifies that students are not expected to be available to teachers outside normal working hours;
- encourages a climate of mutual respect when we use email and phones to communicate;
- creates an awareness among staff of how we can use new technology in an optimal way.

When you are on leave or working from home

If you are not at the office but working anyway (on a business trip or working from home) you must do the following:

- Write where you are and when you will be back at the office on the whiteboard by the door (or another available option).
- Be available via email or phone if possible.

Remote work must always be agreed upon with the closest manager, in accordance with current agreements/regulations. By working from home, you make yourself less available to colleagues. At the same time, your home environment becomes your work environment, and your closest manager is de facto responsible for the latter.

If you are on sick leave, taking care of a sick child (VAB) or on any other kind of leave, you must do the following:

- Report it in Primula.
- Inform your closest manager and ask them to write a note on your whiteboard (or another available option) and, if necessary, programme an “absent” message on your fixed work phone.
- Activate an out-of-office message in your email program

You are not expected to answer the phone or emails. Therefore, you should turn off SLU's email programs and your work phone. You should not contact people on their private phones when they are absent. It is normally not acceptable to contact colleagues when they are off (sick leave/VAB/holiday/leave of absence).

Telephone, email and meeting etiquette

In 2016, the vice-chancellor approved new phone guidelines at SLU (only available in Swedish). Among other things, they state that all SLU employees should have a good "phone culture", which means that all employees should

- represent SLU in a satisfactory way when talking to external parties and the general public;
- be available via a personal or shared telephone extension;
- return missed calls and voicemails.

The guidelines in full: <https://internt.slu.se/globalassets/mw/org-styr/styr-dok/it-tele/riktlinjer-for-anvandande-av-telefon-vid-slu.pdf> (in Swedish only)

You are expected to primarily send emails and make calls during your normal working hours. In the case of urgent matters outside normal office hours (see above), you may text or phone a colleague. Explain that it is an urgent matter if you expect an immediate response. If it is not urgent, colleagues are not expected to reply outside normal working hours or on the same day.

Some tips for better email communication:

- State the subject clearly.
- Do not use the function "Reply all" if you do not want your email to go to everyone.
- The recipient does not have access to your thoughts, only to your text – write clearly.
- Clearly state if and when you want a reply at the latest.

As far as possible, meetings should be scheduled between 9.00am and 16.00pm.

Prepare meetings well to make sure they are effective, and send meeting invitations well ahead of time.