

Work-Life Balance Policy at VSB-TUO

**“Look after your people, and they will look after you and your mission.”
inspired by Richard Branson**

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1 Introduction

Balancing work and personal life is one of the key challenges of today's labour market, and this is also reflected in the academic environment. Universities are places of intense intellectual work, high performance expectations, and time pressure, which can easily lead to an imbalance between professional and personal life. The pursuit of harmony between work and personal life plays a significant role in achieving long-term employee satisfaction, health, and motivation, and also has a substantial impact on the quality of work and the overall culture of the institution.

The most important element of every organisation's functioning is its employees. Without their support and development, success in a competitive environment is impossible. VSB-TUO is convinced that the efforts devoted to enhancing care for all those working at the University are of fundamental importance and play an irreplaceable role in building organisational culture, while also positively impacting the satisfaction and engagement of all employees. The University regards work-life balance as central to a modern and sustainable working environment. Therefore, it emphasises the systematic strengthening of professional competencies, effective working practices, and a proactive approach, all of which contribute to a positive internal culture. This effort also includes a transparent and fair employee appraisal system supported by the digitalisation of processes, ongoing work to retain the HR Excellence in Research Award, and the strengthening of a safe, stimulating, and supportive working environment. These measures create favourable working conditions, enhance the institution's prestige and enable professional success to be achieved in harmony with personal well-being.

The main areas on which support for work-life balance at VSB-TUO focuses are flexible work arrangements, support for parents, disadvantaged individuals and carers, and support for the health, well-being and development of employees.

Individual measures within these areas are continuously updated, adapted and expanded, not only in line with current legislation but also based on the results of employee satisfaction surveys, in accordance with the university's operational conditions and campus capacity. They are designed to meet the needs of all employee groups, respond to diverse life situations, and at the same time respect the principles of diversity and inclusion.

2 Flexible Working Arrangements

2.1 Flexible Working Hours

A flexible working hours scheme is in place at VSB-TUO. It allows employees to choose the start and end times of their working day according to their individual needs, while ensuring that they complete the statutory working hours within a balancing period of one calendar month. The rules governing the use of the flexible working hours scheme are set out in the document [Flexible Working Hours and Rules for Recording Time Worked at VSB-TUO Workplaces](#). Flexible working hours are not applied in cases where the nature of the workplace and its operations do not permit it; in such cases, a uniform or non-uniform distribution of working hours is applied instead.

2.2 Part-Time Work

VSB-TUO supports part-time working arrangements, whereby employees may agree with their employer on shorter working hours than the standard weekly working hours. The remuneration of employees working part-time is adjusted proportionally to the agreed working hours. In cases not expressly regulated by law, i.e. where the employee does not belong to a legally protected group entitled to part-time work (e.g. pregnant employees or persons caring for a child under 15 years old or a dependent person), the decision on reduced working hours is made by the senior employee based on a written request from the employee and mutual agreement. The senior employees authorised to approve part-time work are listed in the document [Employment Rules of VSB – Technical University of Ostrava](#). When making such decisions, they take into account the operational needs of the workplace and the nature of the work performed.

Similarly, work carried out under agreements on work performed outside an employment relationship is permitted at VSB-TUO in workplaces where operational conditions allow, particularly in cases where it is not possible to ensure that the work is carried out by employees under standard employment contracts. This form of cooperation also enables the involvement of parents on parental leave, who, thanks to their familiarity with the working environment, can provide flexible support without losing touch with the workplace. At the same time, it creates opportunities for students and supports them in gaining practical experience for their future careers. Work contracts such as 'DPP' and 'DPČ', offer employees opportunities for self-realisation at various stages of life, for example during periods of reduced or interrupted work activity, or after retirement.

2.3 Remote Working

Remote working, i.e. working outside the workplace specified in the employment contract, is another flexible form of work at VSB-TUO that supports a better balance between work responsibilities and personal life while maintaining the efficiency and continuity of work processes. The high level of digitalisation of administrative processes at VSB-TUO further enables remote working.

This working arrangement may be authorised by the relevant senior employee under the Agreement for the performance of off-site work, provided that operational conditions at the workplace permit it.

3 Age Management

The current demographic situation and forecasts, which clearly confirm the gradual ageing of the population, also affect the university environment, and VSB-TUO is no exception. However, the introduction of flexible working arrangements alone is not sufficient to maintain the productivity, health and satisfaction of employees of all age groups. It is essential to adapt working conditions within a broader context, including the promotion of an inclusive working environment that takes into account the age diversity of the workforce and helps prevent potential generational conflicts.

Human resources management that reflects the age structure of the workforce will be incorporated into the forthcoming HR strategy, where the current informal approach to addressing different age groups of employees will be clearly defined and transformed into practical principles. These will help adapt the working environment at VSB-TUO to the needs of employees at different stages of their working lives, including support for inclusive activities focused not only on gender or background, but also on employees' age.

4 Family Policy

4.1 Support for Parents

Children are our future. At VSB-TUO, we recognise that parenthood places specific demands on time management and the balance between work and family responsibilities. We make every effort to accommodate parents employed at VSB-TUO who request adjustments to their working hours in connection with childcare, and we seek suitable solutions in the form of flexible working arrangements that enable them to fulfil their work duties without unnecessary stress while maintaining their personal well-being. We strive to find individual solutions that are satisfactory

to both parties, even in cases where this is challenging due to operational conditions at the workplace.

Facilities for parents of very young children are available in Building B, which is equipped with nappy-changing tables. Access to all buildings is barrier-free, and upper floors are accessible via passenger lifts.

At the heart of the campus is [the University Kindergarten](#), run directly by the University. Priority for admission is given to children of VSB-TUO employees and students. Having a kindergarten within walking distance of the workplace makes commuting easier for parents, allows them to work with peace of mind, and provides reassurance that they are close to their children should the need arise. The kindergarten is set in the peaceful and safe environment of the campus, featuring spacious indoor areas and an outdoor garden equipped with various play elements. It provides a creative, welcoming, supportive, and safe environment in which children are given ample stimulation for their harmonious intellectual, emotional and social development.

4.2 Programmes for Employees' Children and Grandchildren

Junior University offers a wide range of extracurricular educational programmes, from clubs, lectures, and workshops to expeditions, mentoring schemes, and competition preparation. All activities are led by VSB-TUO teaching employees and students and are designed for children aged seven and above, up to the end of secondary school.

During the academic year, children can attend interest clubs; in the summer months, VSB-TUO organises day camps, tech camps and summer schools on the University campus. The educational and leisure programme, day trips, sports activities, and other recreational pursuits are designed to make meaningful use of time while children's parents or grandparents are at work.

At the end of the year, a traditional 'Mikulášská besídka' is regularly organised for younger children, featuring creative activities.

4.3 Support for Carers

In addition to the parents of minor children, carers also include employees who care for their parents or close relatives. Where an employee acting as a carer can continue to work under adjusted conditions, thereby maintaining not only their professional skills but also important social contacts, a temporary or longer-term reduction in working hours is the preferred and most common solution. However, there may also be periods in employees' lives when they need to care for both minor children and ageing parents or other relatives in need, which makes it even more difficult to balance work and personal life. Even in such specific and challenging life

situations, VSB-TUO treats its employees with sensitivity and seeks suitable solutions to enable them to continue their working lives. In cases where taking a career break is unavoidable, the workplace remains in regular contact with them and, upon their return to work, provides support to help them readjust, with a focus on minimising stress and strengthening self-confidence.

The HR department provides basic information and methodological support to all employees who, for a short or long period, find themselves in a life situation requiring adjustments to their working conditions or other forms of employer support.

A smooth return to work following a career break, whether due to childbirth, caregiving, or other personal reasons, is facilitated by the employee's home department. The process of reintegration and adaptation to the working environment, which may have changed during their absence, is methodically described in the document [Adaptation Process at VSB – Technical University of Ostrava](#).

5 Well-being at VSB-TUO

VSB-TUO ensures a balance in its employees' working lives in terms of physical, mental, and social well-being. When these three spheres intertwine, coping with the demands of everyday life becomes easier for all of us.

5.1 Mental Health

In the area of mental health, group seminars and workshops are organised for employees; their range is continuously updated and adapted to their needs and interests.

Quiet zones are available to employees in libraries and study rooms, which they can use to concentrate undisturbed or to take a short break during work.

The University's interior spaces are being continuously renovated and designed not only to fulfil a practical function, but also to make spending time there a pleasant experience. In many places, communal areas are furnished with sofas or armchairs, which employees can use for informal meetings.

Attention is also paid to the outdoor spaces in which the entire University campus is situated. The ubiquitous greenery is enlivened by the planting of ornamental plants. A significant part of the grounds, left untouched by human hands, preserves natural biodiversity and offers refuge and shelter to many species of insects and small animals. For employees, this part of the campus is a popular spot where they can recharge their batteries in nature.

5.2 Physical Health

At VSB-TUO, we also pay close attention to the physical health of our employees. The University campus offers a wide range of options for exercise and active relaxation. We offer physical activities in the form of relaxation, compensatory, or conversely, dynamic exercise in the morning before the start of the working day and in the afternoon after work. The sessions are group-based, take place in a state-of-the-art aerobics hall and are led by in-house instructors.

The University also has a wide range of sports facilities dedicated to ball sports. These facilities are made available to employees when classes are not in session. The use of sports facilities for team sports can also bring added value in the form of strengthening workplace relationships and deepening team cooperation.

Employee health is also a priority during the winter months. After the working day, employees can use the Finnish sauna on the University campus to relax. Regular sauna sessions help reduce stress, relieve muscle tension, and boost the immune system.

Employees can also take advantage of the MultiSport card, which offers free or discounted access to a wide network of sports facilities, wellness centres, and other leisure activities that promote physical and mental well-being.

In collaboration with other partners, discounted entry to fitness centres within easy reach of the workplace is offered as part of the employee benefits package.

Several bike-share stations have been set up across the University campus and at both more remote faculties, enabling employees to incorporate more exercise into their daily routines, thereby improving their overall well-being and promoting an active lifestyle.

A sports day is organised for employees every year, and they can test their running fitness in a friendly charity run, which takes place regularly at the start of the academic year.

As part of efforts to prevent health problems, seminars are organised for employees aimed at reducing strain on the musculoskeletal system caused by poor posture and alleviating eye strain when working at a computer.

The catering facilities provided by the University, which offers a meal allowance, also make a significant contribution to employees' physical health. Cafeterias offering a varied selection of hot and cold dishes and drinks are operated in buildings on the campus and at satellite sites. The main meal of the day is provided by the University canteen, with serving counters available at more remote sites. Employees can choose from nearly ten balanced meals prepared from fresh ingredients, including a wide range of fruit and vegetables. The menu is also designed with

vegetarians and those with gluten intolerance in mind. The quality of the chefs is evidenced by their medal-winning positions in a recent international canteen competition.

Adequate fluid intake is essential for concentration and mental performance. It reduces fatigue and stress and helps prevent health problems. For this reason, freely accessible water dispensers equipped with high-quality activated carbon filters are located at several points across the University campus. Regular replacement of the filters ensures water of consistently high quality and purity.

5.3 Social Aspect

The quality of workplace relationships, interactions, and employees' engagement in the University's social life are attributes which, taken together, help to create a supportive and inclusive environment in which employees feel part of a whole and have a sense of belonging.

A healthy and welcoming social environment is a shared responsibility; it is not created by a single person or department. It stems from the University's management, which sets the organisational culture and defines and promotes values such as respect, cooperation, integrity, and open communication. Senior employees play a major role in its development and the promotion of these values; they provide their teams with support and recognition, foster teamwork and mutual respect, and ensure equal and fair treatment for all team members.

6 A Safe and Respectful Working Environment

A sense of safety is a fundamental prerequisite for mental well-being and effective work performance. VSB-TUO therefore approaches safety holistically – as a combination of technical measures, prevention, and a culture based on trust.

6.1 Physical Safety

VSB-TUO recognises that a genuine work-life balance inherently includes feeling safe and secure in the workplace. Therefore, alongside flexibility and family-friendly measures, the University places equal emphasis on occupational health and safety and physical security, including risk prevention, first aid training, and the strategic placement of life-saving AEDs. These measures form an essential foundation that enables employees and students to focus on their work and development, knowing that their health and well-being are a priority.

6.2 Social Safety

An integral part of this comprehensive approach is the creation of a socially safe environment built on mutual respect, equality and zero tolerance for any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment. Clear support mechanisms, such as the ombudsman's office, the Ethics Commission, and accessible e-learning courses, ensure that every employee can rely on assistance in challenging situations.

7 Other Ways of Balancing Work and Personal Life

Additional ways in which VSB-TUO supports employees in balancing their work and personal lives, enhancing their motivation, and maintaining their long-term engagement, is a combination of material and non-material tools and benefits. Some offer long-term advantages, while others make every day working life easier.

VSB-TUO supports work-life balance through the following employee benefits:

- On-campus parking: Ensures safe, convenient and, for those commuting from further away, time-saving travel to the workplace.
- Vehicles for private use: The option to hire a car, van, minibus or small coach with a professional driver for hassle-free travel tailored to individual needs.
- Trailer hire: A simple solution for transporting bulkier or heavier loads.
- Leisure and travel:
 - Use of the Lučina facility operated by VSB-TUO for employees' leisure stays.
 - Discounted holiday packages at selected travel agencies.
 - Access to schemes offering discounted train travel.
- Financial security:
 - Contributions to supplementary pension savings to support financial stability in retirement.
 - Additional financial rewards under the collective agreement as a token of appreciation for employee loyalty.
- Discount programmes: Preferential terms, discounts and bonus products in areas such as services, shopping, culture, education, entertainment, healthcare, banking and insurance – enabling employees to access products and leisure activities more cost-effectively according to their individual needs and preferences.

8 Conclusion

VSB-TUO recognises that the true strength of the institution lies in its people. It therefore systematically develops measures that support a work-life balance, enhance employees' health, motivation and satisfaction, and foster an environment based on respect, cooperation and openness. The University regularly assesses and monitors employees' needs through satisfaction surveys.

By promoting work-life balance, the University not only strengthens its prestige and competitiveness, but above all, builds a culture in which employees can achieve professional success in harmony with their personal well-being.

The University will continue to innovate and expand its measures to ensure they remain fair, inclusive and responsive to the current needs of all employees.