



**British
Antarctic Survey**

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Frequently Asked Questions - Human Resources

COMMUNICATIONS

What e-mail account do I use whilst in the Antarctic?

All BAS staff will be provided with a BAS e-mail account. You will be given the address at Induction and you will be able to access your account once you arrive on station or ship. It is worth remembering that BAS Cambridge will only use your official e-mail account so you will need to set up a rule to forward your BAS e-mail to any other personal accounts if you only wish to use another e-mail account.

Please be aware that BAS e-mail accounts are only active when you are on contract therefore you will need to make your own arrangements for e-mails when you leave your station to return home at the end of your contract.

Visitors and contractors will NOT be issued with a BAS e-mail account and will need to have created an e-mail account to use before going away.

Will I have access to the internet whilst in the Antarctic?

Yes, you will have access to the internet whilst on a BAS station or ship - but due to the high cost of satellite communication channels, the data rate is limited. This means that you will not experience the kind of "download" speeds that you might get with a broadband link to your home.

Internet access has been enabled as a business tool, for the transfer of science and business data. Reasonable personal use is permitted, but staff are asked to be considerate and sensible when there is limited availability. There will be times when the system is not available for personal use. ALL usage must comply with BAS and NERC regulations, particularly with regard to downloading or viewing illegal or offensive material. It is each individual's responsibility to ensure that they are familiar with, and comply with, these regulations. Admin notice 02/12: Telephone/Internet Usage and Monitoring at Work is available via the BAS intranet or from Human Resources.

Can I start my own blog or web pages?

Many people now use personal web pages, 'blogs' and social networking sites to keep in touch with friends and family. BAS recognises that these can be good way for staff to keep in contact with home, and is happy to provide internet access where possible and within its capabilities. There are however important things for staff to be aware of in terms of the content of these pages.

The general public are naturally interested in the Antarctic, in BAS, its staff and activities, and we know that people access the blogs and web pages of our employees and visitors on a regular basis. It should be remembered therefore that any such personal web pages or blogs could be interpreted as representing BAS and the BAS/NERC viewpoint.

We expect a sensible, sensitive and professional approach from all authors of these pages. If we become aware of any posted photos or information that is/are inaccurate, potentially defamatory or may otherwise bring BAS or NERC into disrepute we will seek immediate withdrawal of the material and may pursue disciplinary and/or legal action. For the purpose of clarity, defamatory material may be anything that might lead someone to have a worse opinion of BAS/NERC and its operation. If you are in doubt about the material you wish to publish you should seek advice from your Ship's Master/Base Commander/Head of Department in the first instance.

PAY AND ALLOWANCES

When will I be paid?

Your monthly salary will be paid into your designated UK bank account on the previous day to the last working day of every month. You will be paid a month in arrears. For AEP staff and mariners an automated e-mail with a copy of your pay slip is sent to you every month. These are password protected with your Shared Service Centre (SSC) Oracle number – if in doubt please contact Human Resources. For all other staff access to pay slips is via your SSC Oracle account. Any queries regarding your pay should be directed to the Base Commander in the first instance who will then liaise with Human Resources.

How much I will be taxed?

You will be subject to UK income tax in line with the tax code that we receive from the tax office and because everyone's circumstances are different we are unable to provide you with individual tax advice.

The tax rules on overseas earnings are complex and you are advised to speak to your local tax office before you leave the UK, particularly if you are on a wintering contract. The tax office will advise whether or not it is appropriate for you to complete a P85 form.

For those with contracts of employment exceeding 365 days, please refer to the document "Frequently Asked Questions about BAT Tax" which can be obtained from Human Resources.

My over-wintering contract has an end date of 31st January. Why can't BAS extend this to April so that I am eligible for reduced tax?

Like any other organisation, BAS issues contracts in line with its operational requirements and we cannot afford to pay people longer than we need them. We are a publicly funded organisation and as such come under very close scrutiny in this respect. Any personal taxation issues should be resolved with your local tax authority on your return to the UK.

AEP POOL

What does being a member of the 'Antarctic Employment Pool' (AEP) mean?

If you enjoy the experience of working South, being a member of the Pool means that on an annual basis you can decide if you want to be considered for work in the forthcoming season. We will write to you about whether you are interested, normally on an annual basis. A further interview would only be required if you wished to be selected for a post which you had not held previously. (Please note however that we are not obliged to provide you with a further posting and all offers of work are subject to operational need and satisfactory performance.) Being an active member of the pool also means that we can keep you up to date with news and opportunities at BAS, and invite you to special events and activities.

Please note that although the operation of the pool remains unaffected, from the 2012/13 season contracts are no longer issued on an open ended basis but on a Fixed Term basis for each discrete period of work.

What is the end-of-tour bonus awarded for?

A 10% 'end of tour' bonus is paid at the end of a contract to all those who complete their tour of duty and have performed their work to normal satisfactory standards. After three completed successful tours, this will increase to 12.5%.

Additional accrued leave earned whilst on station will now be paid for within the end of tour bonus. This will mean that part of the bonus payment which has hitherto been entirely discretionary, will now become contractual where this relates to liquidated accrued leave entitlement.

What if I leave early? Will I still get the end of tour bonus?

In general no, you will forfeit this bonus as it is not a contractual entitlement. However, if there are strong extenuating circumstances, BAS may make a payment at its discretion. Please note that you will not usually receive the bonus if your work is unsatisfactory or if you are subject to formal disciplinary penalties. You will of course be entitled to any element that is identified as accrued leave.

What is my leave entitlement?

Section 6 of the BAS Conditions of Service for Antarctic Employment Pool staff sets out your leave entitlement. Broadly speaking, leave is earned at a rate of 2½ days per month, pro-rata prior to your departure date or 31st October. In addition you are also entitled to 10 working days embarkation leave. Where the contract end date is more than 6 months from the contract start date a further 2.5 working days for every month in excess of 6 months will accrue in addition to the above. Together with your line manager you should keep a record of any days you are required to undertake training or work in Cambridge as all other periods of 'inactivity' will be defined as annual leave.

TRAVEL

At the end of my contract, what are my options for transport home?

A separate Q&A sheet is issued in September each year, giving the options and explaining the procedures.

In simple terms, BAS will either arrange and pay for a flight home for you, or you may opt to have the equivalent amount in cash and make your own travel arrangements. In most cases your initial gateway will be the Falkland Islands or Punta Arenas, but for a small number it could be other locations.

Please note that you will not have the option of travelling back to the UK by ship.

Why do I have to make my own arrangements for transport home when I arrive back in the UK from the Antarctic?

Bus transport is additionally provided free of charge from your point of arrival back to BAS Cambridge should you wish to take it. Otherwise you have opportunities to book tickets or make other arrangements for your onward journey from the airport on the internet on board ship or in the Falklands.

Unfortunately the number and complexity of travel arrangements for the many AEP staff that return from the Antarctic at different times are too great for BAS to be able to organise transport directly to their homes. You can however claim travel costs for the leg of the journey from your point of arrival home, up to the amount that was paid for your outward journey to the departure airport (but please note that in line with safety guidelines we will not reimburse the cost of hire cars for individuals who have just arrived in the UK from a long haul flight).

MISCELLANEOUS

What do I do if I am unwell whilst in the Antarctic?

The same regulations apply to time spent off work in the Antarctic as in the UK. If you are ill or injured you must inform the Doctor, the ship's Master, or Base Commander. Human Resources must also be informed and the information will be retained on your personal file in Cambridge.

Am I expected to work a 24 hour day whilst South?

Even in the Antarctic you are still bound by the Working Time Regulations (WTR). This means that you should not work over 48 hours per week, averaged over a 17 week period (NB for the purposes of WTR, 'work time' does not include domestic duties on station or ship). Wintering staff will need to keep a log of hours worked and send this to Human Resources in Cambridge on a weekly basis unless you choose to opt out of the WTR. (You will be given this option and the paperwork at Girton Induction.) Cambridge-based staff and staff employed for the summer period are not required to log their hours when they are South due to their length of contract in Antarctica.

What happens if I receive bad news in the Antarctic?

We always recommend that your friends or family inform Human Resources at Cambridge in the event of bad news (e.g. death or illness of a relative/friend). We will pass the message down to the Base Commander, ships Master or the Doctor who can break the bad news face to face. This enables us to make sure you have support right from the start, and that you do not receive bad news "cold" in an e-mail.

In the remote Antarctic environment the support network is very important and this method is our preferred way of handling bad news, but with increased communication over the past few years it does sometimes happen that station members receive bad news via e-mail or direct from their relatives. If this happens we would encourage you to talk to someone (e.g. the Base Commander, ship's Master or the Doctor). This can be difficult for some people, but there are many things that BAS can do to help as long as we are aware of the situation.

Will BAS organise and book a course if I want to spend the quieter winter months completing an Open University distance learning course?

Whilst the winter months are less busy, you will still have work to do. During your free time we encourage you to take advantage of the facilities like the library on station; however BAS is not in a position to arrange or pay for personal distance learning courses. All job specific training will have been provided prior to departure for the Antarctic. Should you wish to pursue a course for personal development, it would be best to get a family contact to co-ordinate this for you. When looking at course options, please bear in mind what access you will have to the internet, and what books or course materials you may need to take with you.

If I have a question which isn't answered in this document, what do I do?

If you have any further questions please contact a member of the Human Resources team in Cambridge. We will be available throughout the week at Girton, and details of how to contact us at any other time is available on a separate information sheet (pick up a copy from the HR desk in the Dining Hall). Once you are in Antarctica, you will be able to look up our direct telephone numbers and e-mail addresses on the ship/station system. You can also find contact details and working areas for each of the HR team on the intranet at: <http://basweb/departments/personnel/index.html>

Human Resources
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