



Managing Sickness Absence Policy

July 2016

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1. Introduction and Aims

- 1.1 We believe that work improves staff wellbeing and employees who are healthy and motivated will help us offer a good service to our students and other customers.
- 1.2 Sickness absence damages the quality and continuity of the service that we provide and particularly affects student support and teaching. It places an extra burden on other members of the team and affects employee morale.
- 1.3 Employees who are genuinely ill will be treated sympathetically and we'll make every effort to help their recovery. Employees should remember to follow our procedures in relation to managing absence.
- 1.4 Line managers will need to balance compassion against business continuity needs, addressing sickness absence in a way that is reasonable and consistent but reflects that each employee's situation is different.
- 1.5 The broad aims of this policy are:
 - To provide a supportive environment to those employees affected by ill health.
 - To manage sickness absence responsibly, consistently and fairly.
 - To take a proactive approach to health and wellbeing and encourage employees to look after their own health and wellbeing.
 - To balance employee interests with our operational needs.
 - To develop a positive culture towards attendance at work and reduce sickness absence.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to our employees including those on secondment and sabbatical. It establishes responsibilities and guidance for both employees and line managers

3 Managing Sickness Absence

- 3.1 Sickness absence may present as frequent short-term absence (possibly with an apparent pattern) or a prolonged period of long term sickness absence.
- 3.2 Short term absence can be difficult to manage as it's usually without notice and difficult to plan for. We have absence trigger levels to manage short term sickness absence and if employees exceed these trigger levels their manager will talk to them about this. These levels are 10 days or 3 periods of sickness absence in the last 6 months or any unusual patterns of sickness absence. Patterns might include; Mondays and Fridays, after periods of annual leave or when specific events/tasks are due.
- 3.3 Long term sickness absence would typically be any absence for more than 4 weeks and is managed on a case by case basis. It normally requires a referral to Occupational Health unless an employee has received clear guidance from their Doctor or the Fit for Work Service. We will usually agree a phased return after a long period of absence. If this is the case employees will build up to their normal working hours over a period of up to 4 weeks in blocks of days/half days. Their non-working time will be recorded as sick leave or annual leave.

4. Employee Responsibilities

- Report any sickness absence (including part days) as early as possible on the first day of absence and in line with your local reporting procedures. Personal contact should be made by telephone unless different arrangements have been agreed.
- Agree with your manager how you are going to stay in contact with them during your absence.
- For any absence over 7 days submit a fit note/Return to Work plan to your manager. If your absence continues submit further copies as needed.
- Not to work from home or attend work without prior agreement when you have been signed off sick via a fit note.
- Attend Occupational Health appointments if asked to do so.
- Look after your own wellbeing.
- Inform your manager of any medical condition that could adversely affect your own or a colleague's health and safety.

5. Line Manager Responsibilities

- Tell employees how to report absence and about their responsibilities under this policy.
- Keep accurate records of all sickness absences (including when less than a day) and monitor regularly to identify any trends.
- Maintain regular contact with employees who are absent from work. This is to provide support and identify how they can return to work earlier.
- Have a [Return to Work Discussion](#) after each absence so that support and advice can be given as soon as possible. You should do this when the employee returns and where appropriate by phone.
- Explore any trends or excessive absence levels by meeting with the employee. Explain the impact that this has on the team and discuss how this must improve. Agree a period of review and if there is no improvement or their absence has got worse discuss with your HR Manager.
- Speak to your HR Manager about sickness absence issues. This should include when an employee has been off sick for 4 weeks or you have identified excessive absence levels.
- Be consistent and fair to all employees.
- If an employee indicates that they are suffering from stress/anxiety signpost them to the support available (see section 13) and undertake a stress risk assessment (see section 9).
- Tell HR Services about any periods of unauthorised absence.
- Follow health and safety policies and procedures and do risk assessments when required.

6. Dean/Director Responsibilities

- Make sure that a system is in place to accurately record sickness absence for employees in your Faculty/Service.
- Implement and comply with all health and safety procedures within your Faculty/Service,
- Put arrangements in place for risk assessments and health surveillance checks.

7. Occupational Health

7.1 We will normally refer employees to Occupational Health:

- When they have been absent for 4 weeks or more.
- When they have a medical condition that is affecting their ability to attend work regularly or do their job
- When they have high levels or a pattern of frequent short term absence
- When they indicate they are suffering with stress and/or anxiety.

If the situation is straightforward or we have received detailed advice from their Doctor or via a Return to Work Plan we'll decide whether a referral is necessary.

7.2 We will ask Occupational Health to provide advice on issues such as:

- If an employee is fit to do their job now or within a reasonable timescale.
- If an employee is fit to do a different job.
- If any reasonable adjustments are required.
- If a phased return is needed to help an employee return to work.
- If an employee has any underlying health issues.
- If an employee will be able to attend work regularly in future.
- How we can support an employee.
- If there is anything an employee can do to improve their health and attendance at work.
- Advice on ill health retirement.

7.3 An employee may be referred to the [Fit for Work](#) service by us or their GP to help them return to work.

8. Sickness Absence and Annual Leave

8.1 In most cases annual leave can't be used to cover sickness absence as it must be pre-planned and booked in advance.

8.2 Employees who are sick during their annual leave and want this period recorded as sick leave must provide a fit note or equivalent. The cost of getting this must be met by them and the certificate must be in English or have been translated. The annual leave will be credited back for them to take at another time within the holiday year.

8.3 Employees who are unable to take their annual leave during the current holiday year because of extended sickness absence can substitute a period of sickness absence with a period of annual leave. If this is not possible they can carry forward any outstanding statutory leave to the following leave year.

9. Stress and Mental Health at Work

9.1 We recognise that many employees will suffer from mental health issues during their working life and we're committed to promoting mental wellbeing to our employees.

9.2 If employees tell us they are suffering with stress we will help them identify why they are stressed and consider how we can reduce this by doing a stress risk assessment as soon as we're able to.

10. Disability

- 10.1 We will provide support to help employees with a disability remain in work. Further guidance is available [here](#).

11. Capability due to Ill Health

- 11.1 If an employee is unable to do their job or attend work regularly we'll meet with them to discuss the options. This may include exploring alternative employment or if there's no alternative termination on grounds of capability.

12. Ill Health Retirement

- 12.1 We operate two pension schemes – the Teachers' Pension Scheme and the Local Government Pension Scheme. Each pension scheme has different regulations and procedures relating to ill health retirement. Employees can discuss this with their HR Manager.

13. Help and Advice

- 13.1 Each Faculty and Professional Service has an HR Manager to provide support and guidance on managing sickness absence issues. Click [here](#) for the contact details for each work area.
- 13.2 Our [Workplace Health and Wellbeing](#) website provides advice on health and wellbeing issues and gives details of specialist organisations to contact for support and advice.
- 13.3 Our employee support helpline is a free, independent 24 hour advice line, for you to discuss any concerns affecting your attendance. Further details are available at [HR Online \(Staff Area\)](#).
- 13.4 Employees with a disability can contact [Access to Work](#) for advice. They'll do an assessment of an employee's needs in the workplace and may provide a grant towards the cost of any necessary support.
- 13.5 The [Fit for Work](#) service offers free, expert and impartial work related health advice.

14. Review

We will review this policy on a regular basis in line with any changes to legislation, and in any case no later than three years from the date of the last review.

APPROVED BY CMT 18 July 2016