

## SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Purpose

**1.1.1.** The aim of this policy is to assist employees in maintaining regular attendance at work and to support managers and supervisors (hereafter referred to as managers) in reducing levels of absence among staff in a fair and consistent way. For the purpose of this policy, absence is defined as a period of time where an employee is not present at work, at a time when they are contractually obliged to be.

#### 1.2. Scope

**1.2.1.** The following policy and procedure applies to all Operational employees. Non-Operational staff will refer to the University Staff Sickness Absence Policy and Procedures.

**1.2.2.** New members of staff who are within their probationary period will be managed in accordance with the relevant Probationary Policy, which provides alternative arrangements for dealing with attendance issues.

#### 1.3. Principles

**1.3.1.** The University must have regard for the health, safety and welfare of all employees. A proactive approach to staff welfare is an effective means of supporting attendance.

**1.3.2.** High levels of absence have a negative impact upon the quality of service for customers, and other employees and can result in a significant cost to the department. For these reasons maximising attendance for all employees is integral to the University.

**1.3.3.** This document provides a framework for addressing matters of non-attendance, however it must be recognised that individual circumstances may necessitate a tailored response. In such circumstances the manager must use their judgment in order to sensitively address the matter with due fairness, and with regard for the interests of both the individual and the department.

**1.3.4.** The University will treat any abuse of this policy and procedure as potential misconduct.

#### 1.4. Equality Act

**1.4.1.** This policy has been drafted with regard to the Equality Act 2010. For the purposes of the Equality Act, a person is considered to have a disability if they have a **physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out**

**normal day-to-day activities**, or have been diagnosed with a specific illness which gains recognition under the act.

- 1.4.2.** Under the Equality Act, there is a legal obligation for employers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, and to enable an employee who becomes disabled during the course of their employment to remain in work. Reasonable adjustments may include adaptations to premises, equipment or working arrangements.
- 1.4.3.** Guidance regarding whether an employee's medical condition is likely to fall under the act, and what can be considered as reasonable adjustments, can be obtained via a referral to Occupational Health and through discussion with Human Resources.
- 1.4.4.** There may be circumstances where it is not possible to make reasonable adjustments, or where the medical condition has deteriorated and the adjustments are no longer working, and/or it is not possible to make further adjustments to allow the employee to continue in their post. In such instances consideration will be given to options such as supporting the employee in their search for alternative employment and the application for ill health retirement. Should all options have been exhausted, the matter may be referred to senior management who will consider the employee's continued employment.

## **1.5. Special Circumstances Scheme**

- 1.5.1.** The University's Health and Hygiene Regulations require anyone with the following conditions to refrain from working with either food or children, and to remain off work for 48 hours from when the symptoms stop naturally:
  - a) Diarrhoea
  - b) vomiting accompanied by fluctuations in body temperature
  - c) ear, eye or nose discharge, excluding colds
  - d) contagious skin infections
- 1.5.2.** On the day of incapacity, the employee must telephone their manager to report illness as soon as possible prior to their shift commencing.
- 1.5.3.** Such absences will still be counted towards absence monitoring.
- 1.5.4.** Employees who fall ill at work with any of the above conditions must inform their manager immediately. Should the manager consider the individual to be unfit to continue, the same procedure will apply.
- 1.5.5.** Employees that work with either food or children who have had more than 2 absences due to sickness/ diarrhoea in any 12 month period, must be referred to Occupational Health.

## **2. POLICY**

### **2.1. Monitoring and Reporting Absence**

#### **2.1.1. Absence data**

- a) Absence data should be used to monitor and manage absence fairly and consistently. The information must also be used pro-actively to identify any absence trends or areas of concern, and to act upon these accordingly, thereby reducing absence. It is therefore imperative that absence is recorded for all employees in a consistent manner via the relevant system.

#### **2.1.2. Notifying absence from work**

- a) On the first day of absence when unfit to work, the employee must personally telephone their manager or senior manager as soon as possible prior to the start of their shift. All managers can be contacted on a direct line and staff should keep a note of the number on which their manager can be contacted. The employee should telephone personally and, in any event, no later than 30 minutes before the start of their shift.
- b) If employees are unable to contact their manager, they should contact a supervisor or failing this, they should leave a message with the Reception Desk on (01782) 734014. Out of hours, at weekends or Bank Holidays a message should be left with the Security Staff on (01782) 733004.
- c) It is important that employees maintain direct contact with their manager. If a message is left with Reception or Security, the employee should leave a telephone number to enable their manager to contact them later. When employees are absent through sickness, their manager may contact them by phone and/or letter.
- d) Employees must indicate at the time of initial notification how long they expect to be away from work and when they expect to return. If it is unclear when an individual expects to return to work, they should phone in daily unless a pattern of contact is agreed with the manager.
- e) Employees must inform their manager of their intention to return to work as soon as possible, or by 4.30 p.m. on the day prior to their return.
- f) For any sickness absence of 7 calendar days or less, all staff must complete a self-certificate form which can be obtained from their manager. For absences extending beyond 7 calendar days, staff must submit a doctor's medical certificate (Fit Note) from their GP. Subsequently staff must submit consecutive medical certificates to cover the whole period of their absence. Staff must ensure that their manager receives the medical certificate within 3 days of the due date, or following the expiry, of any previously supplied medical certificates.
- g) Staff must ensure that they still maintain appropriate contact with their manager, even if a medical certificate has been submitted.
- h) Failure to follow these procedures could result in loss of earnings and may be dealt with under the Unauthorised Absence procedure (see 2.1.3)

### **2.1.3. Unauthorised absence**

#### **a) Failure to notify absence**

- I.** If an employee fails to attend work and does not notify the University within the required timescales or via the correct procedure, this may be classed as unauthorised absence and may result in loss of payment.
- II.** If no contact is made by the employee at all, pay will be suspended and the manager will attempt to make contact. If contact is established, the manager should inform the individual of their failure to comply with the notification of absence procedure. Further discussion should be held with the employee as part of their return to work interview to clarify future expectations, and to inform them that a further failure to comply with this procedure may result in the matter being investigated in accordance with the Staff Disciplinary and Appeals Policy and Procedure.
- III.** If no contact is established, a letter will be sent to the employee requesting that they make contact to advise of the reason for their absence. Should the employee's absence become prolonged with no notification, the Staff Disciplinary and Appeals Policy and Procedure may be invoked to investigate the employee's continued unauthorised absence. This could result in the termination of the employee's contract.
- IV.** Advice should be sought from the HR Employee Relations Team at the earliest opportunity should an employee fail to notify their manager of their absence.

#### **b) Failure to provide a medical certificate**

- I.** If an employee informs their manager of their absence, but fails to provide the appropriate medical certificate, this may be deemed unauthorised absence and may result in loss of payment.
- II.** In the first instance attempts should be made to contact the employee to request that the certificate is provided within a reasonable timeframe. The employee should be clearly informed that failure to provide a certificate by the specified date may result in loss of payment and their absence deemed unauthorised. Wherever possible this should be relayed to the employee in writing.
- III.** Persistent failure to provide fit notes may be pursued under the Staff Disciplinary and Appeals Policy and Procedure.
- IV.** Advice should be sought from a member of the HR Employee Relations Team at the earliest opportunity should an employee fail to provide an appropriate medical certificate.

#### **2.1.4. Statements of Fitness to Work**

- a) These Statements (commonly referred to as a 'Fit Note') will indicate that an employee is either 'fit for work', 'unfit for work' or 'may be fit for work'. Where the employee 'may be fit for work', the manager needs to consider the additional advice provided and discuss this with the employee, where necessary taking appropriate advice from the HR Employee Relations Team and/or Occupational Health. If it is not possible, or appropriate, for the University to provide the support for the employee to return to work with the suggested adjustments, the Statement of Fitness for Work should be regarded as advice that the employee is not fit for work (i.e. continues their period of sickness absence).
- b) Please refer to section 2.1.5 Rehabilitation/Phased Return to Work where adjustments need to be considered to enable the employee to return to work.

#### **2.1.5. Rehabilitation / Phased return to work**

- a) Where an employee is due to return to work following a period of long-term sickness absence, or where a medical certificate advises of circumstances in which the employee 'may be fit' for some work, the manager will need to meet with the employee to discuss their return to work. The manager will need to consider, following advice from the Occupational Health Service and the HR Employee Relations Team as appropriate, whether there are any work issues that need to be discussed and agreed with the employee prior to their return, e.g. changes to work practices, alternative duties, support measures, phased return plans.
- b) Phased return plans may involve the member of staff initially working reduced hours or carrying out reduced duties, gradually building up to their normal hours or duties by the end of the agreed period, usually no longer than 4 weeks. The appropriateness and practicality of phased return plans will be discussed between the employee, their manager and the HR Employee Relations Team, seeking advice from the Occupational Health Service where necessary.
- c) Where a recommendation is made that the employee should return to work on fewer hours than they are contracted for, they should not suffer any loss of payment in comparison to the amount that they would have received under the terms of the Sick Pay Scheme which applies to them. Human Resources will be able to provide further information about payment arrangements.

#### **2.1.6. Return to work procedure**

- a) Return to Work interviews should take place promptly after each period of absence, regardless of length of absence. The meeting should be of an informal nature, typically 1-to-1 between the returning employee and the manager, and it is the manager's responsibility to complete the Return to Work form (Annex C). Return to work interviews give the manager the opportunity to welcome the employee back, update them on any workplace news and to discuss how the employee can be supported back into a normal work routine as quickly as possible. The manager may also discuss any concerns they

have regarding the level of the employee's absence and any other relevant issues including a failure to follow the absence notification procedure.

- b) Both parties are required to sign the form as an accurate record of the meeting.

## 2.2. Occupational Health Service

### 2.2.1. Purpose of the Occupational Health Services

- a) The Occupational Health Service assists in preventing work-related ill health. The service assesses the effects of work on employee's health, and provides advice to management on how ill health may affect the individual's work capabilities and any necessary intervention requirements.

### 2.2.2. Referrals to Occupational Health

- a) Referrals made to Occupational Health are a supportive measure and are intended to provide management with advice regarding the employee's condition and how best to support the employee in work. Referrals can be made if an employee is absent from work, or if they are present in work as a preventative measure.
- b) An immediate referral must be made to Occupational Health in the following instances:
  - I. Where an employee cites **stress/ anxiety/ depression/ nervous debility**.
  - II. Where an employee cites a **musculo-skeletal/back/spinal condition**.
  - III. Where an employee has been absent, or there is an indication that they will be absent, for 4 weeks or more (unless the circumstances clearly indicate that a referral would not be meaningful at that stage, in which case the manager should discuss this with the HR Employee Relations Team).
  - IV. Where an employee who is working with food or children has had more than 2 absences due to sickness/diarrhoea in a rolling 12-month period.
- c) Wherever possible, managers must discuss the referral and its contents with the employee before submitting the Occupational Health referral form. Managers should also explain to the employee that the referral is a supportive measure to provide management with advice on how best to support them in achieving / maintaining regular attendance at work. In exceptional circumstances, where it has not been possible to contact the employee to discuss the referral, a letter should be sent along with a copy of the referral form to the employee.
- d) A referral should contain sufficient detail to ensure that Occupational Health can provide an informed reply. The form should include:
  - I. Information regarding the individual's health and sickness record
  - II. Issues that are impacting on work performance
  - III. Details regarding any relevant disability or underlying health condition
  - IV. Details of reasons for the referral and a summary of the discussion with the individual being referred

- V.** Managers should also include specific questions that they would like the Occupational Health Service to respond to. Advice on appropriate questions can be obtained from Human Resources.
  
- e)** It may be necessary for the Occupational Health practitioner to request information from the employee's GP or Consultant where this is deemed necessary. In these circumstances, Occupational Health will discuss this with the employee and appropriate approval will be sought.
  
- f)** An employee may self-refer to Occupational Health. In this instance, the manager would not receive a copy of the report unless the employee had specifically requested that the information be released to other parties. Employees should be aware that in these circumstances, it is extremely difficult for their manager to provide appropriate support and adjustments if they are not aware of the employee's concerns. Employees are therefore encouraged to be open with their manager where possible.
  
- g)** Managers may at any time refer an employee to the Occupational Health Service where it appears that an employee is unable to perform their duties as a consequence of illness, or where pro-active action is thought necessary to support an employee to continue performing their duties.
  
- h)** It should be made clear to the employee that failing to attend Occupational Health appointments may result in management making employment decisions without the professional information an Occupational Health specialist can provide.

### **2.2.3. Occupational Health reports**

- a)** Following an employee meeting with Occupational Health, a report will be forwarded to the manager for consideration and will also be copied to the Human Resources Employee Relations Team and the employee. This report will be shared with the employee in the first instance. Please note that in instances where an employee has self-referred to Occupational Health, the manager would not receive a copy of the report unless the employee had specifically requested that the information be released to other parties.
  
- b)** Upon receipt of the report, managers should discuss the content and any recommendations with the employee. Recommendations should be considered carefully by the manager and further advice sought from HR Employee Relations Team if necessary.
  
- c)** In making any decision regarding an individual's employment, the University will consider all relevant information that has been made available, including any Occupational Health/medical advice resulting from a management referral.

## **2.3. Absences other than sickness**

### **2.3.1. Annual Leave**

- a) No holidays should be booked without first seeking permission from the employee's manager, as operational issues specific to the work area will need to be considered before holidays are authorised.
- b) Annual leave should not be granted for periods of sickness absence, or unauthorised absence where the employee has failed to make contact with the University.

### **2.3.2. Dependant Leave**

- a) A dependant is the partner, child or parent of the employee, or someone who lives with the employee as part of their family. In cases of illness, injury or where care arrangements break down, a dependant may also be someone who reasonably relies on the employee for assistance. This may be where the employee is the primary carer or is the only person who can help in an emergency.
- b) Employees are permitted to take a reasonable amount of unpaid dependant leave for urgent reasons such as illness, disruption in care arrangements or an incident involving the employee's child or an adult dependant. For example, if a child falls ill, the leave should be enough to help the employee cope with the crisis - to deal with the immediate care of the child, visiting the doctor if necessary, and to make longer term care arrangements.
- c) Employees must telephone their manager as soon as possible should they need to take a period of dependant leave, explaining the reason for the absence and how long they expect to be away from work.
- d) In most cases one or two days will be sufficient to deal with the emergency. If any period of dependant leave lasts longer than two days, or the employee takes 4 or more occasions in any rolling 12-month period, the matter will be discussed with the employee to establish expectations. High levels of dependant leave will be investigated. All periods of dependant leave should be recorded. A record will also be kept in instances where annual leave is granted at late notice for this purpose.
- e) Individual circumstances should always be taken into account before refusing to grant such absence. Any such decision should be discussed with the HR Employee Relations Team.

### **2.3.3. Compassionate Leave**

- a) Paid Compassionate Leave may be granted for urgent personal reasons. Such reasons may include cases of bereavement, or serious illness/injury which requires nursing for a dependant.
- b) Compassionate Leave is not normally allowed for the bereavement of a friend or colleague, although paid time off will usually be granted to attend the funeral. The



amount of time allowed will be agreed by the manager and will take into account location and time of day etc.

- c) A member of staff may apply for up to five days Compassionate Leave with pay. Applications for Compassionate Leave should be made to the employee's manager who will determine the amount of leave to be authorised. The manager will consider each application according to the relevant circumstances of the individual concerned; including the nature of the relationship, responsibility for funeral arrangements and the location of the funeral.
- d) Requests for Compassionate Leave should be recorded and forwarded to the HR Administration Team to be placed on the employee's record. Where Compassionate Leave is refused, the manager needs to provide the member of staff with the reason and ensure that this is documented. Managers must ensure that, where applicable, any periods of Compassionate Leave are accurately recorded on the time and attendance system.
- e) Where 5 days Compassionate Leave proves insufficient, the manager will encourage the member of staff to use some annual leave entitlement. If this is not possible and there is a need for more than 5 days Compassionate Leave, the manager should seek further advice from Human Resources.
- f) Compassionate Leave does not count against annual leave entitlement.

#### **2.3.4. Dental / Medical Appointments**

- a) The University recognises that there will be times when an employee will need to attend medical, hospital, dental or other similar appointments. Wherever possible employees (both full and part time) should endeavour to arrange such appointments in their own time, or if this is not possible, at a time that will cause the minimum amount of absence or inconvenience.
- b) Time off to attend routine medical appointments may be deemed a reasonable adjustment where the treatment/appointments relate to an underlying condition or disability. In such cases, managers should discuss the individual circumstances with the HR Employee Relations Team.
- c) Employees must obtain approval from their manager in advance of any appointment. The manager reserves the right to ask an employee to reschedule an appointment if its timing would cause disruption to the business. Employees may also be asked to produce an appointment card or letter.

### **2.4. Managing repeated short-term / intermittent sickness absence**

#### **2.4.1. Overview**

- a) The procedure for managing repeated short-term/intermittent absence consists of the following stages:
  - I. Informal Review**

- II. **Formal Review Stage 1**
- III. **Formal Review Stage 2**
- IV. **Formal Review Stage 3 – Referral to Senior Management (Grade 8 or above)**

- b) In order to treat staff consistently it is important to establish clear criteria which would prompt action. It is recommended that this procedure should be initiated when an employee reaches one of the following triggers:
  - I. 4 separate occasions of sickness absence, regardless of the length of time, in the preceding 12 month period, or
  - II. A total of 10 days (pro rata for part time staff to the equivalent of 2 weeks) in 2 or more occasions of sickness absence in the preceding 12 month period, regardless of the number of individual absences.
- III. Note:
  - These triggers include both certified and self-certified sickness absences.
  - Occupationally acquired illness or injury may be excluded from the triggers where a link was established at the time of illness/injury, and the Health and Safety Department were formally involved.
- c) If there is a suggestion that the underlying cause of employee absences may be linked to a disability or medical condition, the matter must be discussed with the HR Employee Relations team at the earliest opportunity, and in such circumstances the Sickness Incapability Procedure may be followed (Section 2.5).
- d) It is important that managers consider the individual circumstances relating to the absences before taking action under this procedure. Advice should be sought from Human Resources and/or Occupational Health as necessary.
- e) The following guidelines will be adhered to where an employee has accrued sickness absence as defined above.

#### 2.4.2. Written notification

- a) It is important that for any **formal** meetings under this procedure, the employee is given **5 working days written notification** of the meeting, which must also state their right to be accompanied by a recognised Trade Union representative or by a colleague who is a current University employee.
- b) Once the meeting has been held, a summary of what has been discussed should be compiled within an outcome letter. The manager and Human Resources representative should discuss and agree how and who should action this.

#### 2.4.3. Representations

- a) Employees are entitled to be accompanied by their Trade Union representative or a work colleague at all **formal** meetings under this procedure.

#### 2.4.4. Informal Review

- a) Where an employee's absence level reaches the triggers set out above, the manager should hold an informal review. It is important that managers explore the cause of the absences and ways in which acceptable levels of attendance can be supported and maintained.
- b) The manager should have a discussion with the HR Employee Relations Team prior to the meeting if the employee has extenuating circumstances or if absences are related to a significant underlying health condition / disability / pregnancy.
- c) Whilst conducting the meeting, managers should complete an Informal Absence Review Meeting Record which both parties should check and sign at the end of the review. A copy of the form can be found in Annex E.
- d) It is important that the impact of the employee's absence and their responsibility to attend work on a regular and sustained basis is made clear. Managers must inform the employee that their absence will be monitored for a period of 12 months. It is recommended that the following attendance targets are set:
  - i. **No more than 5 days or 3 occasions of absence over the following 12 month period.** These may be amended based on the individual circumstances of the absences under review.
- e) The new attendance targets should start with immediate effect following the meeting and it is important therefore that managers conduct the informal review in a timely manner.

#### 2.4.5. Formal Stage 1

- a) If following the Informal Review the standards identified have not been met, it will be necessary for the manager to consider meeting with the employee on a formal basis. It is important that managers explore the cause of the absences and ways in which acceptable levels of attendance can be supported and maintained. Further guidance of what should be discussed at a Formal Stage 1 absence meeting can be found in Annex F.
- b) Managers should seek advice from the HR Employee Relations Team as appropriate throughout the process.
- c) Where appropriate, and based on discussion, managers should make it clear to the employee if they have failed to achieve the required levels of attendance and therefore their absence will be monitored for a further period of 12 months. It is recommended that the following attendance targets are set:
  - i. **No more than 5 days or 3 occasions of absence over the following 12 month period.** These may be amended based on the individual circumstances of the absences under review.
- d) The new attendance targets should start with immediate effect following the meeting and it is important therefore that managers conduct the Formal Stage 1 review in a timely manner.

- e) Managers should consider referring the employee to Occupational Health (if not already undertaken). It may be necessary to obtain an up-to-date report where one has already been obtained at an earlier date.
- f) It is recommended that managers use their professional judgement and consider individual circumstances in relation to the progression of an absence case.

#### 2.4.6. Formal Stage 2

- a) If following Formal Stage 1 the standards identified have not been met, it will be necessary for the manager to meet with the employee as part of Formal Stage 2 of the process. It is important that managers explore the cause of the absences and ways in which acceptable levels of attendance can be supported and maintained. Further guidance of what should be discussed at a Formal Stage 2 absence meeting can be found in Annex F.
- b) A discussion should be held with the HR Employee Relations Team prior to the meeting if the individual has extenuating circumstances or if absences are related to a significant underlying health condition / disability / pregnancy.
- c) Where appropriate, and based on discussion, managers must make it clear to the employee that they have failed to achieve the required standards of attendance and therefore their absence will be monitored for a further period of 12 months. It is recommended that the following attendance targets are set:
  - i. **No more than 5 days or 3 occasions of absence over the following 12-month period.** These may be amended based on the individual circumstances of the absences under review.
- d) The new attendance targets should start with immediate effect following the meeting. It is important therefore that managers conduct the Formal Stage 2 review in a timely manner.
- e) It is recommended that managers use their professional judgement and consider individual circumstances in relation to the progression of an absence case. Should a manager feel that it would not be appropriate to progress an individual's absence case, it is recommended that they take further advice from the HR Employee Relations Team.
- f) In the unlikely event that the employee has not been referred to Occupational Health, a referral must be made as soon as it is evident that the employee's attendance has not met the required standard and that Formal Stage 2 will need to be instigated. It may be necessary to obtain an up-to-date report where one has already been obtained at an earlier date.
- g) **Managers must ensure that reasonable options to help improve the employee's levels of attendance are explored, for examples, changes to working arrangements or redeployment opportunities. Managers should utilise the information provided to them**

**by occupational health when considering any alternative duties, amendments or support measures.**

- h) The employee must be informed at this meeting that failure to achieve the required levels of attendance may result in the matter being referred to Senior Management who will consider their continued employment.

#### **2.4.7. Formal Stage 3**

- a) If the employee fails to achieve the required levels of attendance as specified within Formal Stage 2 of the process, the matter should be presented to a Senior Manager who will consider dismissal for repeated, unacceptable levels of non-attendance.

### **2.5. Sickness incapability Procedure**

#### **2.5.1. Overview**

- a) The sickness incapability procedure will be applied when either;
  - I. an individual has been absent long term, i.e. 4 weeks or more (see 2.5.2)
  - II. an individual has frequent short-term sickness absence relating to a significant underlying health condition or a disability (see 2.5.2)
- b) Human Resources will provide advice and support to managers in the application of this procedure.

#### **2.5.2. Managing long-term absence**

- a) Sickness absence is treated as long-term under these guidelines once a member of staff has been absent continuously for 4 weeks or they have submitted a Fit Note for a duration of 4 weeks or more. An immediate referral must be made to Occupational Health for employees that have been, or are expected to be, absent long term.
- b) The recommended process for managing long term absence consists of the following stages:
  - I. Ongoing consultation through absence review meetings
  - II. Medical input/opinion
- c) **Maintaining regular contact**
  - I. Managers have a duty to ensure that regular contact is maintained with employees who are absent from work in order to:
    - discuss and seek the employees views on their condition, the impact upon work, any likely support needs and if applicable, the comments contained in an Occupational Health report
    - keep informed as to the employee's progress
    - try to establish a return to work date
    - inform the employee of any work-place developments they may have missed
    - ask what support the department can provide

- II. The above points will naturally be discussed at Absence Review Meetings, however managers are also encouraged to speak to the absent employee informally, in-between meetings, to ensure that regular contact is maintained. Informal discussions can be held via telephone or face to face (by arrangement) and would normally take place without Human Resources or Trade Union presence. Managers are encouraged to take notes of any discussions that are held and may use the Contact Log (Annex H) for this purpose.

**d) Absence review meetings**

- I. Where an employee's absence is prolonged or there is no reasonable prospect of them returning within the foreseeable future, it is necessary for the manager to hold an Absence Review Meeting. This is a formal meeting and therefore employees must be given **5 working days written notification** which must also state their right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a work colleague. Human Resources will also be in attendance at these meetings.
- II. Guidance on what should be covered in an Absence Review Meeting can be found in Annex G. The number of absence review meetings to be held will depend on the medical prognosis and the operational effect of the absence.
- III. Once an Absence Review Meeting has been held, a summary of what has been discussed should be compiled within an outcome letter. The manager and Human Resources representative should discuss and agree how and who should action this.
- IV. To aid an employee's return from long term sickness absence, consideration should be given to a phased return to work (see 2.1.5).
- V. If following a reasonable series of Absence Review Meetings, and on the advice of Occupational Health that a return to work in the foreseeable future is unlikely, and alternatives have been explored, consideration may be given to the termination of employment on the grounds of ill health capability.

**2.5.3. Frequent/short-term sickness absence related to a significant underlying health condition or a disability**

- a) This procedure applies where a member of staff has frequent, short term absence caused by either a significant underlying health condition or a disability, and therefore such absences **may not** be managed in accordance with Section 2.4 of this policy.
- b) If it becomes clear that there is a significant underlying medical condition or disability that has been the cause of a number of an employee's absences, the manager should seek advice from Occupational Health. The referral should seek to determine the extent and likely duration of the condition and if applicable, whether treatment will reduce absenteeism to an acceptable level. Advice should also be sought regarding reasonable adjustments that could be implemented to assist the employee in sustaining their

attendance at work. Further information regarding reasonable adjustments can be found in Section 1.4 and from Human Resources.

- c) Where such absences become frequent, Absence Review Meetings should be held with the individual in accordance with Section 2.5.2.d. guidance on what should be discussed in an Absence Review Meeting can be found in Annex G.
- d) Following a reasonable period of time, if an individual's frequent absence persists and is likely to continue, despite adjustments and alternatives being thoroughly explored with Occupational Health and through a series of Absence Review meetings, consideration may be given to the termination of employment on the grounds of ill health capability.

## **2.6. Medical incapacity**

**2.6.1.** In cases where the employee is at work, but is unable to perform all or part of their role for reasons connected to their health despite reasonable adjustments being considered, the manager must contact a member of the HR Team. In these circumstances, further support and advice will be sought from Occupational Health.

## **2.7. Supporting the search for alternative employment**

**2.7.1.** The University will do whatever is reasonable and practicable to retain employees whose health prevents them from continuing in their present job. Where medical advice indicates that an employee is not fit or is not likely to be fit in a reasonable timescale to return to their current post or is at work but is not fit to undertake their job on a sustained basis, but alternative work would be possible, the University shall consider whether there is any suitable alternative employment. In such circumstances, the principles contained within the University's Redeployment Procedure will be followed.

**2.7.2.** Occupational Health may advise that although the employee is permanently unfit for the job they do, they are fit enough to do other work. Managers should consider whether it is possible to make reasonable adjustments to the existing job before exploring the possibility of other kinds of work.

**2.7.3.** There are several aspects that need to be considered when exploring the possibility of alternative work:

- a) Any alternative work must be suitable, both from the employee's point of view and from the employer's;
- b) The period allowed for the search for alternative work is clearly finite, although it is impossible to prescribe any given period. In practice, what is reasonable will depend on:
  - I. Perceived prospects of success
  - II. The availability of such vacancies
  - III. The period of notice needed to terminate the contract

- IV.** The employee's remaining capabilities may have been quite narrowly defined by the Occupational Health Practitioner and may be further limited by the skills and experience of the employee concerned.

**2.7.4.** It is important to recognise that an employee who has successfully acquired alternative employment will require support in order to adapt into their new role. A trial period of a minimum of 4 weeks may be appropriate to ensure suitability. In line with the Redeployment Procedure, this period may be extended following agreement with Human Resources.

### **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **3.1. Manager Responsibilities**

**3.1.1.** Managers have a responsibility for supporting the welfare and attendance of employees.

**3.1.2.** The role of the manager will be to comply with the provisions of this policy and associated procedures through effective communication, accurate recording and reporting processes, undertaking return-to-work meetings and working in conjunction with the Human Resources Department regarding the management of absence.

**3.1.3.** Managers have a duty to ensure that all matters relating to an individual's sickness absence or ill health remain confidential.

**3.1.4.** Managers should seek the advice of the Human Resources Department prior to initiating any formal action under this policy and associated procedures.

#### **3.2. Employee Responsibilities**

**3.2.1.** Individual employees have a duty to attend work regularly and consequently must take all reasonable steps to protect their own welfare, and to assist in the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and workplace.

**3.2.2.** Employees have a responsibility to comply with the requirements set out within the Supporting Attendance Policy and Procedure.

#### **3.3. Human Resources Responsibilities**

**3.3.1.** Human Resources will provide information, support and guidance to managers on attendance matters, including updates on employment law and good practice. It is the responsibility of the Human Resources Department to ensure that the policy is regularly developed and updated.

### **4. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- The University Staff Sickness Absence Policy and Procedures
- The University's Health and Hygiene Regulations
- Redeployment Procedure
- Probationary Policy
- Staff Disciplinary and Appeals Policy and Procedure.



## 5. REVIEW, APPROVAL & PUBLICATION

As a general principle, the Policy will be reviewed by the HR Department, in consultation with recognised Trade Unions, after three years or where operational and/or legislative requirements change. Any revisions will be approved in accordance with UEC and Council procedures, where applicable.

This policy is not contractual and is not intended to be incorporated into individual terms and conditions of employment. It may be subject to review, amendment, or withdrawal.

## 6. Annex

- Operational Sick Pay Scheme, Annex A
- Self Certification Form (SCF1A), Annex B
- Return to Work Interview form - Operational Staff, Annex C
- Guidance Note for Conducting Informal Absence Review Meetings, Annex D
- Informal Absence Review Meeting Record form, Annex E
- Guidance for Conducting Formal Stage 1 and 2 Meeting, Annex F
- Guidance for Conducting Absence Review Meetings, Annex G
- Contact Log, Annex H

## 7. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

<b>Document Name</b>	Supporting Attendance Policy and Procedure for Operational Staff
<b>Owner</b>	Chief People Officer, Human Resources
<b>Version Number</b>	1.2
<b>Equality Analysis Form Submission Date</b>	[Decision from Equality Analysis and form submission date]
<b>Approval Date</b>	19 December 2023
<b>Approved By</b>	Chief People Officer (minor edits)
<b>Date of Commencement</b>	1 August 2015
<b>Date of Last Review</b>	14 December 2023
<b>Date for Next Review</b>	14 December 2026
<b>Related University Policy Documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The University Staff Sickness Absence Policy and Procedures</li><li>• The University's Health and Hygiene Regulations</li><li>• Redeployment Procedure</li><li>• Probationary Policy</li><li>• Staff Disciplinary and Appeals Policy and Procedure.</li></ul>
<i>For Office Use – Keywords for search function</i>	Absence, Sickness, Ill health, Illness

## Annex A – Operational Sick Pay Scheme

Sick pay entitlement for Operational Staff is as follows:

Under 13 weeks' service	2 weeks' full pay and 2 weeks' half pay
After 13 weeks	8 weeks' full pay and 8 weeks' half pay
During 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup> year	13 weeks' full pay and 13 weeks' half pay
During 4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> year	21 weeks' full pay and 21 weeks' half pay
5 years +	26 weeks' full pay and 26 weeks' half pay

**Annex B – Self Certification Form**

<b>SELF CERTIFICATION FORM (SCF1A)</b>
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**PERSONAL DETAILS**

Name:	
School / Department:	
National Insurance Number:	

**PERIOD OF SICKNESS ABSENCE**

Date absence began:	
Last date of absence:	
Date of return to work:	

**REASONS FOR ABSENCE**

**Please tick all that are applicable and provide brief description below**

Anxiety/ Depression/ Other Mental Health condition		Asthma	
Back Problems		Benign and Malignant Tumours/ Cancers	
Blood disorders (e.g. anaemia)		Burns/ poisoning/ frostbite/ hyperthermia	
Chest & respiratory problems – excluding nose & throat/asthma/cold/cough/flu		Cold/ cough/ influenza	
Dental and oral problems		Ear/ nose/ throat (ENT)	
Endocrine/ glandular problems (e.g. diabetes/ thyroid/ metabolic problems)		Eye problems	
Gastrointestinal problems (e.g. abdominal pain/ vomiting/ diarrhoea)		Genitourinary and gynaecological disorders – excluding pregnancy related disorders	

Headache, migraine		Heart/ cardiac/ circulatory problems	
Injury/ fracture		Nervous system diseases (e.g. multiple sclerosis/ Cerebral Palsy/ Epilepsy)	
Other Musculoskeletal Problems (not back)		Pregnancy related disorders	
Skin disorders		Stress	
Infectious disease – hand foot and mouth/ malaria/ meningitis/ measles/ mumps/ shingles		Other (specify reasons):	
Substance misuse – including alcoholism & drug abuse			

**Details of sickness absence:** .....

.....

I declare that I have not worked during the above period of sickness and that the information given is correct.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Please pass this form to your manager for discussion at a return to work meeting.

Manager: I confirm that I have met with the above named to discuss this period of sickness.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

Annex C – Return to Work Interview Form

**RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW FORM – OPERATIONAL STAFF**

This form must be completed by the manager on the employee’s first day back at work (or within 5 days of their return)

Purpose of the return to work interview:

- Welcome employee back and enquire about their health and welfare.
- Bring employee up to date with work/ reallocation of work during their absence.
- Employee to assist manager to identify where they can help or take action to help prevent a further recurrence of sickness absence. Record actions agreed.

Employee Information
Employee Name: .....
Employee Job Title: .....
Department: .....
Current Absence
First date of absence: .....
Last date of absence: .....
Date of return to work : .....
Total number of working days absent: .....
Type of certification for absence: Self Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for absence: .....
.....
Was the absence a result of an injury at work or work related accident and illness?
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, please give details.....

**If this absence is as a result of an accident at work, has an accident form been completed?**

Yes  No

**Did the employee follow the notification set out in the Supporting Attendance Policy throughout their absence?**

Yes  No

**If No, please give details** (explore why and explain requirement according to the absence procedure):

.....

**Update employee on any events during the period of absence:**

.....

**Date of discussion with employee:** .....

**Was the meeting:** face-to-face  via telephone

**Absence History**

**(A) Absence record in the past 12 months:** .....

**(B) Number of occasions of absence in the past 12 months:** .....  
(including most recent absence)

**(C) Total number of occasions of absence in the past 12 months:** .....  
(including most recent absence)

**Future Action**

**Has the employee met a trigger point?** Yes  No

*(refer to Supporting Attendance policy for more information on trigger points)*

**If YES which stage?**

Informal  Formal 1  Formal 2  Formal 3

**Is a referral to Occupational Health required?**

Yes  No

**Is a Risk Assessment required (workstation/stress etc)?**

Yes  No

**Summary of discussion**

**Manager comments / action**

(include information regarding any support measures that can be put in place to help the employee back into their work routine/ help the employee to sustain their attendance, and any meetings required regarding absence levels)

**Employee comments / action**

Employee Signature _____	Date _____
Manager Signature _____	Date _____

**Appendix D**

**Intermittent absence: Guidance Note for Conducting Informal Review Meetings**

The bullet points below are intended as a guide only. For further advice and guidance, managers should contact HR.

- Advise the employee that this is an informal review meeting within the Supporting Attendance policy. Signpost the employee to a copy of the policy.
- Confirm the employee’s absence record as correct. Discuss the employee’s health and well-being to establish if there is an underlying reason for their high level of non-attendance.
- Consider any ‘non-medical’ (especially work-related or welfare) issues which may be contributing to the absences. Sickness absence may only be a symptom; there is a managerial responsibility to search for the underlying problem and, if possible, to support the employee in addressing it.
- Discuss what support can be offered if there is an underlying reason for the absences, e.g. the Counselling Service, consider adjustments etc.
- Discuss a referral to Occupational Health if this has not been done already.
- Discuss, with due sensitivity, what external medical help the employee is getting.
- Ensure the employee is aware of the acceptable standard of attendance, and get their commitment to reach it. Recommended attendance targets can be found in 2.4.4
- Set a period during which attendance will be monitored, typically 12 months.
- Advise the employee that if attendance does not meet the acceptable standard the matter may be dealt with through Formal Stage 1 of the policy.

**Note to managers:**

- It is recommended that managers use their professional judgement and consider individual circumstances in relation to the progression of an absence case.



- It is important to record an accurate account of what was discussed during the meeting. The Informal Absence Review Meeting Record (Annex E) may be used for this purpose.

Annex E – Informal Absence Review Meeting Record

<b>INFORMAL ABSENCE REVIEW MEETING RECORD</b>
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<b>Employee name:</b>	
<b>Manager name:</b>	
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	
<b>Details of absences being discussed in meeting (previous 12 months)</b>	
Identify any patterns, e.g. days of the week; recurring reasons, failure to follow absence notification procedure etc	
<b>(A) Number of days absence in the past 12 months:</b> (including most recent absence)	
<b>(B) Number of occasions of absence in the past 12 months:</b> (including most recent absence)	
<b>Details of discussion and possible causes of absence level which could include:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Medical conditions</b></li> <li>• <b>Personal issues</b></li> <li>• <b>Work issues</b></li> </ul>	

**Details of any support agreed to assist employee to improve level of attendance which could include:**

- **Occupational Health referral**
- **Access the Staff Counselling Service**
- **Adjustments to role (temp or permanent)**
- **Change in working hours**

**Details of attendance targets set and confirm that failure to achieve the targets set could result in consideration of formal action**

It is recommended that the following attendance targets are set:

**No more than 5 days or 3 occasions of absence over the following 12 month period.**

These may be amended through discussion with HR

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Manager Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Annex F – Intermittent Absence: Guidance for Conducting a Formal Stage 1/ Stage 2 Meeting

The bullet points below are intended as a guide for the meeting only. HR are available to support at all such meetings to provide further guidance.

- The employee's absence record should be confirmed as correct.
- The employee should be given the opportunity to explain any further factors which may have arisen and contributed to their levels of absence.
- Consider any 'non-medical' (especially work-related or welfare) issues which may be contributing to the absences. Sickness absence may only be a symptom; there is a managerial responsibility to search for the underlying problem and, if possible, to support the employee in addressing it.
- The manager should reinforce the impact that the employee's absence is having upon the team and service as appropriate.
- Support should be offered to assist the employee in reaching an acceptable standard of attendance.
- If appropriate, the employee should be made aware of the Staff Counselling Service.
- Referral to the Occupational Health Service should be initiated, (if not already undertaken), unless there are valid reasons for not doing so. A referral must be made by Stage 2.
- By the end of the meeting, managers should after considering the particular circumstances:
  - Restate the level of attendance required and set a period during which this standard should be achieved. Recommended attendance targets can be found in 2.4.5 or 2.4. Typically the monitoring period will be 12 months.
  - Explore any support measures where the University may be able to help the employee to achieve the required standards of performance;
  - Caution the employee clearly about the possible outcomes if they fail to meet the agreed targets. NB: At Stage 2 the caution should clearly state failure to meet the targets set may result in the matter being taken to Senior Management with a recommendation for dismissal.

### Note to managers:

- It is recommended that managers use their professional judgement and consider individual circumstances in relation to the progression of an absence case.
- If an employee's absence relates to pregnancy, an underlying health condition or a disability, further advice must be sought from HR before the formal meeting is held.
- Prior to the meeting, the manager must have given the employee **5 working days written notice** of the meeting. More information can be found in 2.4.2
- It is important to record an accurate account of what was discussed during the meeting.
- Following the meeting, the manager must complete and distribute a letter to the employee summarising the discussion. More information can be found in 2.4.2.

## Annex G – Guidance Note for Conducting Absence Review Meetings

The bullet points below are intended as a guide for the meeting only. HR are available to support at all such meetings to provide further guidance.

- Prognosis enquiry about the employee's health and general welfare.
- Discuss the report from Occupational Health and any recommendations.
- Where possible, explore if/when the employee may be able to return to work and agree what support the University can provide to help achieve this.
- Give details of outstanding sick pay entitlement.
- Consider whether any reasonable adjustments can be made to facilitate a return to work.
- Advise the employee that they can access support and counselling through the University Staff Counselling Service; supply the employee with a leaflet if required.
- If medical information is available that indicates that the employee may be unable to resume in their current job, early consideration should be given to alternatives such as supporting the search for alternative employment, ill health retirement etc. Employees should be provided with information regarding these options.

### Discussion of the Possibility of Termination

NB: These points should only be discussed/ raised where it has been identified following earlier exploratory meetings that there is no reasonable prospect of a return in the foreseeable future, or where the employee will not be sufficiently fit to return to full or alternative duties in the alternative

- Advise that in the event that the employee is unable to return, the University may need to consider the termination of the employment contract. A decision to terminate employment should only be taken after adjustments and other alternatives have been fully investigated and exhausted. (See Section 2.7 for information regarding the search for alternative employment). Any Ill Health Retirement provisions for members of the pension scheme should also be fully explored.
- Advise the employee to consult with their professional association or Trade Union representative regarding the matter, if they have not already done so.

### **Note to managers:**

- Prior to the formal review meeting the manager must have given the employee **5 working days written notice** of the meeting. More information can be found in 2.4.2.
- It is important to record an accurate account of what was discussed during the meeting.
- Following the meeting, the manager must complete and distribute a letter to the employee summarising the discussion. More information can be found in 2.4.2.

Annex H – Contact Log

<b>CONTACT LOG</b>
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<b>Employee name:</b>	
<b>Manager name:</b>	
<b>Date of call/ meeting:</b>	
<b>Time of call/ meeting:</b>	
<b>Who initiated the phone call?</b>	
<b>(If a phone call) did the manager reach the employee?</b>	
<b>Agreed future contact:</b>	
<b>Brief summary of call/ meeting</b>	
Manager Signature _____ Date _____	