



SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

ORDINANCE 26

Rev	Date	Purpose of Issue/Description of Change		Review Date
1.				
2.				
3.				
	Policy officer	Senior Responsible Officer	Approved By and Date	Equality Impact Assessed and date
	Deputy Chief People Officer	Chief People Officer	University Council 30.09.24	05.09.24

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2 Defining Sickness Absence

- 2.1 Sickness absence refers to an employee's absence from the workplace due to ill-health. In deciding whether the Sickness Absence Policy or the Capability and Supporting Performance Policy will initially apply, consideration should be given to how the ill-health is affecting the employee's ability to carry out their job to the required standard. If the issue is primarily that the individual has unacceptable levels of absence from work, then the Sickness Absence Policy will initially apply. If the individual is largely attending work but their performance of their work is affected due to ill-health, the Capability Policy will apply. Unauthorised absence which is an issue of conduct may fall within the scope of the University's relevant Disciplinary Policy.
- 2.2 Advice should be sought from Human Resources if managers are unsure which procedure is appropriate or they believe they may need to follow.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 Employees:

Will alert managers to any problems/issues which may have an impact on their attendance/health or performance so that they can offer suitable support.

Will follow correct notification/certification processes, ensuring their manager has as much information as possible about their absence to enable them to provide appropriate support and advice.

Will maintain regular contact with their manager whilst off on sickness absence, (the frequency and means of contact should be agreed with the manager).

Will update their sickness absence data within i Trent via ESS (Employee Self Service).

Will engage in processes, which may include attendance/remote attendance at informal/formal meetings whilst off on sickness absence, e.g. sickness review and return to work discussions, attendance at Occupational Health.

3.2 Managers:

Are responsible for ensuring that the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure is applied fairly and consistently within their area of responsibility.

Have a duty of care for the health, safety and welfare of their staff and will work supportively in conjunction with HR and Occupational Health to support staff who are absent from the workplace.

Are responsible for ensuring that all sickness absence episodes are recorded (via MSS – Manager Self-Service) in the i Trent system.

Are responsible for managing sickness effectively, ensuring absence is monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure that problems or patterns are identified and managed at an early stage.

Are responsible for remaining in contact with absent employees throughout their period of sickness.

Should discuss with the absent employee how they would like to be contacted in future, how frequently and by whom. If the line manager is not the most appropriate person to keep in touch, offer alternatives.

Should be sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of staff members.

Should be aware that communication style and content could affect the wellbeing of the staff member and impact on their decision to return to work.

Should ensure that they are aware that the purpose of keeping in touch is

5 Contact during Sickness Absence

- 5.1 Employees should maintain regular contact with their Line Manager and/or HR where appropriate. Where possible the regularity of contact will be agreed during the initial call. If it is appropriate, their manager and/or HR may initiate contact to alleviate any work concerns and provide support where possible to facilitate a future supported return to work.
- 5.2 Where telephone contact/email is not possible alternative arrangements for continuing contact should be agreed e.g., text message, post, online meeting etc. These arrangements should be agreed in advance and employees should not wait until the first absence occurs.
- 5.3 Where members of staff fail to maintain regular contact, their Line Manager will make contact, including via their personal contact details or if appropriate, by way of a pre-arranged home visit, to ascertain the reason why and to receive an update or to arrange an absence review meeting to discuss issues associated with the absence and/or to discuss a return-to-work strategy. Contact in such circumstances should be reasonable to the situation, e.g. where there are welfare concerns.
- 5.6 Being signed off sick from work does not preclude employees from attending meetings with their manager, and/or HR or Occupational Health to discuss their prognosis, likely return and any adjustments that might need to be made, unless the Fit Note specifically says that they are not fit to attend such meetings. However, the University will make reasonable adjustments where necessary and appropriate.
- 5.7 The University reserves the right to progress matters by other means – including offers to deal with matters via telephone, online meeting, occupational health appointment, medical reports or meeting at a neutral location. Lack of engagement will result in the process being continued in the employee's absence based on the information held at the time.
- 5.8 Where staff members have not engaged or responded to repeated attempts at contact, the University may potentially withhold pay following careful consideration of the circumstances and following notification to the staff member in writing.

6 Sickness Absence Certification

- 6.1 Employees are required to submit relevant documentation to support the period of sickness absence as follows:

Absence 1-7 calendar days	A self-certificate must be completed on their return to Work
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6.2 It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that all sickness absence documentation is submitted promptly to the

8 Return to Work Review

The staff member's immediate line manager will ensure that a return-to-work discussion is carried out for all individuals following self-certified or certified absence from work.

9 Short-term absence

Short-term absence is defined as absence of up to 28 calendar days and may not relate to an underlying health condition.

9.1 The management of recurrent short-term absence

9.1.1 The absence of an employee due to sickness for 5 periods of absence in a rolling 12 month period, or 28 calendar days or more within the same period will trigger a review of their absence record (part day absences may count towards these triggers). This is what is meant by 'trigger point'.

9.1.2 Where this trigger point has been reached the employee's line manager will need to review the case as part of the return to work review and consider:

- a) Whether the absences relates to sickness arising from a disability/underlying health condition or other reason relating to a protected characteristic. The line manager should seek support from HR and/or Occupational Health in reaching this decision
- b) Whether there is a likelihood of a reoccurrence
- c) Whether the absence record indicated a trend/pattern of absence e.g. before or after holidays, following weekend or non-working days
- d) Whether there has been failure to follow the sickness notification procedure, especially if on repeated occasions reminders have been given

The above list is not exhaustive and other relevant information could be used in the review.

9.1.3 A review will allow a manager to decide, based on the individual case, how best to proceed. Depending on the circumstances the manager may decide to:

- a) Take no further action,
- b) Begin formal absence review arrangements (no underlying health reasons).
Further information provided in section 9

contact, establishing the facts surrounding their absence, prognosis and possible time scales for return to work.

10.1.2 In less complex cases, where the prognosis for absence is clear from an early stage and the employee is expected to be fit for work within a particular timeframe, the line manager and employee may be able to agree locally what

10.2.6 Where absences are likely to continue and a return to work plan cannot be facilitated during the initial attendance reviews, either after the first or second attendance review meeting, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the

absence cases consent may be requested of the employee for Occupational Health to seek a medical report from the employees GP or specialist.

- 12.5 Where information is not forthcoming or consent is not given, decisions will be made in the light of information available to the University.
- 12.6 A case conference approach may be recommended by Occupational Health or HR as part of an attendance review to support the employee back to work following sickness absence or to address work related issues (including disability) which require collective discussions.
- 12.7 Where a case conference approach is recommended attendance review meetings will typically include:
- Employee
 - Relevant line manager
 - HR representative
 - Occupational health representative
 - Employee Representative (if the staff member requests)
- 12.8 In some circumstances it may be necessary to include other individuals where specialist advice is required in considering and implementing workplace adjustments.

13 Ill Health Retirement

- 13.1 The criterion for ill health retirement is having a medical condition that is permanent or likely to last until 65 years of age where employees could be

- Participate in activities which are in any way contrary to the employee's certified illness.
- Undertake any other employment whether paid or unpaid, or undertake voluntary work which is incompatible with the nature of the illness.

14.5.2 The University recognises that participation in leisure activities may be compatible with, and even prescribed as therapy for, certain illnesses, e.g. mental health conditions (social prescribing).

14.6 Third Party Claims

If individuals are making a claim against a third party (e.g. following a car accident) included in the claim must be the cost of both Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and Occupational Sick Pay received as a result of the injury or illness, details of which will be provided by Payroll. When such a claim is successful the individual must reimburse the University the appropriate costs of sick pay.

14.7 Instruction to Leave Work on Health Grounds

14.7.1 A manager, Occupational Health practitioner, or Human Resources may instruct an employee to leave work where they believe an employee is unwell or has a condition which causes concern and presents a risk to the employee and/or others. The employee must see their GP as soon as possible unless that is contrary to public health advice, in which case they must observe that advice.

14.7.2 Where the GP issues a Fit note, the absence will be recorded in the normal way. The absence is paid as sickness absence. Where a GP does not issue a Fit note, the employee is not required to record a period of sickness absence and instead continues to receive full pay for the duration of the instruction by the manager / Human Resources to remain at home.

14.7.3 In certain cases, an employee may be suspended from work on medical grounds. An example may include, but is not limited to, where a staff member's health condition impacts on their ability to maintain their own health and safety and/or the health and safety of others. Such suspension will be on full pay and shall be reviewed in line with any medical advice received. The decision to suspend will be taken by the Chief People Officer in consultation with the Occupational Health practitioner.

15 **Policy Review**

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed 12 months after its implementation, and then at regular intervals of not less than three years and will at all times be read and applied subject to the general law. All reviews will be undertaken in consultation with the recognised campus Trade Unions and any changes agreed with them, prior to approval from the University Council.

16 Equality Impact Assessment

This Policy has been Equality Impact Assessed based on consultation and information available at the time of the Policy being developed. A further Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out in conjunction with any review of the Policy.