Absence Management Policy

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It is essential that staff comply with these procedures for reporting absence and for claiming sick pay.

Purpose

The University's mission is to become the UK's leading University for world-class professionals. The University aims to strengthen the student experience with emphasis on high-quality teaching and course provision. The University strives continuously to improve the attainment and quality of the teaching provision to enhance the lives of our students; all staff play a significant role in the achievement of these objectives. The University recognises that a committed, motivated workforce is integral to the achievement of its strategic objectives. Through its Managing Absence Policy, the University aims to create a culture within which all employees work to maximise attendance for the benefit of both themselves and stakeholders.

The University is committed to maintaining the health, safety and welfare of its most important asset – its workforce - and will seek to adopt policies and practices which establish a positive attendance culture and promote staff wellbeing.

All employees have a responsibility to the University and colleagues to attend work and fulfil their contractual obligations. Whilst treating staff fairly, the paramount consideration is the efficiency of the organisation. Where absence is adversely affecting this, it must be addressed.

Managers are responsible for the implementation of this Policy and for ensuring that all employees are aware of their health and safety responsibilities. Each individual will be responsible for cooperating with management in respect of health and safety matters, and is required to take reasonable care for his/her own health and safety and those of others.

Scope

This Policy covers the management of short term and long term absence and applies to *all* staff employed by the University with the exception of those in their probationary period of service, who will be covered by separate terms and conditions relating to their employment.

Failure on the part of an individual employee to comply with any aspect of the Managing Absence Policy and Procedure may result in action being taken in accordance with the University's Disciplinary Procedure.

The Managing Absence Policy provides a framework for the consistent management of absence across the University. Managers are required to apply this Policy. There is no recourse to the University's Grievance Procedure for individuals whose absence has been dealt with in accordance with this procedure.

Principles

Within the Policy and Procedure, the University will:

- Require employees to comply with procedures for reporting absence to their manager and for claiming sick pay
- Require managers or supervisors to make contact with each employee on his/her return to work and make early contact with employees experiencing ill-health, and to ensure that such contact is maintained throughout the period of illness and on return to work
- Ensure consistent treatment of all employees who are absent from work
- Seek medical advice from appropriate practitioners for example Occupational Health and the employee's GP as appropriate
- Observe confidentiality as appropriate
- Provide where possible early intervention to support those with developing health problems
- Take action to address long term absence, including where appropriate dismissal on the grounds of capability independently of an employee's position in respect of the sick pay scheme
- Recognise and record disability related absence separately from absence for other reasons

Records Management

The primary purpose of formally recording absence is to provide line managers with information on the employee's attendance and to assist the line manager in his/her efforts to promote a positive attendance culture.

Each period of sickness absence will be formally recorded by the manager via Your Self Service, and every employee will be required to meet with his/her line manager/supervisor on their return to work. If you are not on the University network (e.g. working from home), you will need to access Your Self Service using the Remote Access Service.

The employee's absence record will be used as part of any review of absence or any other occasion where the line manager believes that the information is of material relevance to any decisions regarding the employee.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Medical practitioners are required by law to ensure the confidentiality of individuals' medical data. This includes medical diagnosis, symptoms, treatment and prognosis. This does not mean that they cannot have meaningful discussions with managers about the consequences of these issues and the impact these may have on individuals in the work place.

All records that relate to an individual's absence are classified as "sensitive personal data" under the Data Protection Act and must be stored and processed in accordance with the requirements of the University's Data Protection Policy.

Pregnancy and Sickness Absence

Pregnancy related sickness absence will be recorded separately and not be taken into account when considering whether or not the absence triggers have been met. If the absence is not pregnancy related the normal absence procedures will apply.

An employee who is absent due to a pregnancy related illness during the four week period prior to her due date will be required to start her maternity leave, and will be entitled to maternity pay and not sick pay.

Disability and Sickness Absence

The majority of disabled people do not require any more time away from work than other employees. Although an impairment may impact on a person's day-to-day activities, it does not necessarily impact on their general health. Accordingly, the absence of a disabled member of staff will be dealt with under the provisions of this Policy and procedure, where appropriate.

Nevertheless, under the Equality Act 2010 there is a need to recognise that employees with a disability may need to be away from work to either receive treatment for their disability or that they may be absent from work

as a result of their disability. In either case, accurate recording is essential to ensure that disability related absence can be clearly identified as distinct from other absences. It is important to establish at an early stage whether absence is disability related; occupational health advice will be sought as appropriate.

Disability Related Leave

Disability related leave may be granted in circumstances where an employee, as part of their treatment for a disability, takes time off for therapy, hospital appointments, rehabilitation, assessment or treatment. It is reasonable that an employee be allowed this type of leave as it is part of managing their disability and plays an important part in keeping them fit for their role. Disability related leave may be considered as a 'reasonable adjustment'.

Generally, disability related leave is for a fixed period and will be covered by appropriate documentation a copy of which should be provided to the manager in advance of the appointment.

Disability related leave will be recorded separately from sickness absence and should not be used by employees to cover periods of sickness absence whether or not the absence relates to the persons' disability.

Disability Related Absence

There will be occasions when a disabled employee needs to take sickness absence as a result of their disability. In accordance with best practice, disability related absence will be recorded separately from non-disability related absence.

Both disability-related and non-disability-related absence will be counted for the purposes of sick pay and for any action required as part of this Policy. However, recording the absences separately will assist managers in taking appropriate action and will enable them to fully consider the application of 'reasonable adjustments'. In such cases, this may include extending the absence triggers. Each period of sickness will, to a certain extent, be unique and consideration will need to be given to the amount of disability related absence that is 'reasonable' and the extent to which the absence triggers can be extended.