

SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1 STATEMENT AND SCOPE

- 1.1 The University recognises that there are occasions when employees are absent from work for a variety of legitimate reasons and has a series of procedures for managing these absences in accordance with good practice and UK legislation.
- 1.2 Absence from work may occur for a wide variety of reasons including personal illness or injury. Some types of absences are covered by statutory provision, whilst others form an integral part of the employees' conditions of service. Statutory obligations include:
- Statutory Sick Pay
- 1.3 In all cases, absence from work should be approved by the line manager. In cases where absence is unplanned (e.g. sickness) the employee should notify their line manager as soon as possible of the circumstances, why they need to take leave and their likely date of return to work.

2 SICKNESS ABSENCE

- 2.1 An employee is entitled to take sick leave when that employee:
- is actually ill;
 - is temporarily disabled.
- 2.2 Entitlement to paid sick leave will vary depending on the length of service of the employee. Details are contained within the contract of employment or can be found under [Sick pay scheme](#) on the A-Z of the Human Resources website.

From 6 April 2026, UK Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) becomes a "day one" entitlement. All employees, regardless of earnings, will be eligible to SSP from their first day of sickness. Where staff receive occupational sick pay, this will be inclusive of SSP.

- 2.3 **Monitoring and managing sickness absence**
The University reserves the right to monitor and manage the sickness absence levels of all employees. Where excessive levels of sickness absence or a recognisable pattern of sickness absence is identified, line managers should adopt the University's Absence management procedure. Details of this can be found under ['Absence'](#) on the A-Z of the Human Resources website.

2.4 **Managers' responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of all managers to carry out the following:

- Ensure there are written local procedures regarding the management and reporting of absence in their area.
- Give all staff a copy and ensure they understand;
- Give a copy to every new starter at induction and ensure they understand;
- Accurately record all staff absence and return this information to Human Resources;
- Conduct Return to Work Interviews (RTWI) for all absences using the **Return to Work Form**, found on the [Human Resources Forms website](#)
- Refer an employee to Occupational Health (OH) when any of the following have occurred,
 - A Bradford Trigger point has been hit.
 - They have been on long-term sickness (one absence of 20 days or more)

- OH recommends early intervention when someone is absent due to mental health issues, so refer after only 2 weeks
- The manager must explain to the employee why they have been referred
 - Act on any reasonable adjustment recommendations that OH subsequently make unless there are strong business reasons why you believe you cannot.

2.5 Employee responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all employees to:

- Comply with local sickness reporting procedures.
- Be clear who your line manager is, or who you are required to report absences to.
- Maintain reasonable contact with your line manager during periods of absence.
 - Due to workload planning and other considerations, your line manager has a right to know when you will be back at work. Therefore, you must ensure you keep them updated with your situation and when you are likely to return.
- Provide the appropriate medical certificates for all absences in a timely manner:
 - Self-certificate, for absences that last between 1-7 consecutive days, OR
 - Doctors certificate (Fit note), for absences lasting more than 7 consecutive days (including weekends and bank holidays).
- Attend Return to Work Interviews after every absence.
- Be familiar with the [3 Stage Approach flow chart](#) for managing absence (see absence Management).
- Attend absence review meetings.
- Attend and participate in Occupational Health referrals.
- Appointments to visit doctors, dentists or hospitals should be arranged out of working hours if at all possible, to avoid disruption to the working day. If this is not possible you should try to arrange your appointment for either the beginning or the end of the working day in order to minimise any disruption. It is your responsibility to notify your line manager in advance of any medical, dental or optical appointments. If your total absence from work as a result of such an appointment is less than 3 hours, the absence will not be recorded as sick leave. Absence over 3 hours will be recorded as sickness absence.

2.6 Sickness or injury while on holiday

Where an employee falls sick or is injured while on holiday, the employee may choose to treat the days of incapacity as sickness absence instead of annual leave.

In order to reclaim annual leave employees must comply with the following conditions:

- In line with normal absence reporting procedures the employee must make contact with their line manager as soon as possible, even if they are abroad.
- If the period of sickness lasts for up to seven calendar days a self-certification form must be completed.
- If the period of sickness exceeds seven days, it must be fully certified by a qualified medical practitioner. In exceptional cases, where it is not possible to obtain a medical 'Fit Note', other evidence of illness/injury from an appropriate independent person (such as a tour operator, insurer, overseas medical practitioner or pharmacist) must be provided.

An employee will only be able to reclaim annual leave if the illness or injury would have made them unfit to perform their normal duties had they been at work, rather than on annual leave. The fact that an employee sustains an injury that makes it difficult for them to 'enjoy' their holiday, e.g. a sprained ankle that makes it impossible to ski will not count as sickness absence.

Any abuse of this policy may lead to disciplinary action.

2.7 Sickness or injury shortly before a period of planned holiday

If an employee is ill or is injured before the start of a period of planned annual leave the University will agree to the employee postponing the holiday dates to another mutually agreed time. Any period of sickness absence will then be recorded in line with the University's sickness absence procedure.

- 2.8** The employee must submit a written request if they wish to postpone the planned holiday and comply with the usual reporting and certification requirements in respect of sickness absence.
- 2.9** **Required physical examinations**
The employee may be required at any time to submit to an examination by the University Occupational Health department and/or another physician approved by the University, at no cost to the employee. If an employee fails to attend an arranged OH appointment, disciplinary action may be taken.
- 2.10** **Extended sick leave**
In very exceptional circumstances an employee's manager, in conjunction with their Head of Department, may grant additional paid leave for a personal illness or injury to an employee after a review of the merits of that particular case. This will exclude illnesses or disabilities of an immediate family member.
- 2.11** **Return to work interviews**
Return to Work Interviews are a central part of the University's Absence Management procedure. Line managers are required to carry out brief, informal and confidential interviews with employees on all occasions when they return to work following absences due to sickness using the return-to-work form which together with the Absence Management procedure can be found on the Human Resources website.

Last Fully Reviewed June 2016