

SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

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CONTENTS

Section	Title	Page
1	Introduction	3
2	Purpose	3
3	Application	3
4	Principles	3
5	Employee Responsibilities	4
6	Manager Responsibilities	6
7	False Declaration of Sickness Absence	6
8	Sickness Absence and Annual Leave	7
9	Payment During Absence	7
10	Frequent Short-term Absence	7
11	Formal Sickness Absence Management process	8
12	Long-term Sickness Absence	10
13	Phased Return to Work	11
14	Disability	12
15	Redeployment	12
16	Occupational Health Referrals	12
17	Wellbeing and support	13
18	Statutory Sick Pay	13
19	Injuries at Work	13
Appendix A	Template letter to summarise outcomes from manager's meeting	14
Appendix B	Template letter to initiate a stage one meeting	15
Appendix C	Template letter to summarise outcomes from manager's meeting	16
Appendix D	Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)	17

1. INTRODUCTION

The University aims to provide a safe and healthy work environment for its employees, with a high standard of attendance crucial to delivering its services. Managers have a duty to ensure safe working conditions and not to expose employees to reasonably foreseeable risks of injury.

Employees who are absent on sick leave will be treated sympathetically and every reasonable effort will be made to assist recovery and safeguard employment. It is also recognised, however, that loss of working days through unnecessary sickness absence can be a significant cost to the University in terms of work not completed or the costs of arranging absence cover, as well as the additional pressure that this places on colleagues.

The Guidelines are based on ACAS recommendations and have been drawn up in consultation with the recognised campus trades unions. Professional advice and support is available at all stages from the relevant Associate HR Business Partner or HR Business Partner. Managers are encouraged to discuss issues with the Business Partnering team at the earliest opportunity.

2. PURPOSE

The broad aims of these Guidelines are:

- to provide a supportive environment for employees affected by ill-health;
- to ensure that sickness absence is managed responsibly, consistently and fairly, giving employees confidence in the University's approach;
- to encourage and develop a positive culture towards attendance at work;
- to encourage and develop a positive culture towards managing work effectively to prevent unnecessary sickness;
- to define the responsibilities of all University employees in relation to implementing the Guidelines.

3. APPLICATION

In order to ensure consistency of treatment, the Guidelines apply to all categories of employee. Where employees are covered by the University Statute 7, the process referred to will be carried out in accordance with the Statute and nothing in the Guidelines shall be intended to alter or amend individuals' rights under the Statute. Any enhancements to the University's statutory provisions, or changes to the legislative framework that affect these Guidelines will automatically be incorporated.

Employees who are classed as hybrid workers or home workers are subject to the same requirements in respect of sickness absence as those who work on Campus.

4. PRINCIPLES

- Clear, comprehensive and accurate records will be maintained for all employee absences. All Schools and Departments are required to submit monthly returns to Payroll detailing this information;
- during induction all new employees will be made aware, by their line manager, of the University's procedure for reporting absences, any local requirements and their responsibility to comply with both;
- the management of sickness absence is the joint responsibility of the line manager and the employee;
- documentation relating to sickness absence should be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Those responsible for maintaining sickness records, normally the immediate line manager, must ensure that absence records are held in a secure place and made available only to authorised employees (normally the Head of Department or nominated representative, HR Operational Services staff and Payroll);
- for short-term sickness absence, managers should recognise and attempt to resolve informally sickness absence issues without recourse to the Sickness Absence Management process (Section 11). For long-term sickness absence, each case will be dealt with on its own merits, with management and HR support and intervention reflecting the circumstances of each case;
- employees will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague at all stages of the formal process. A member of the Human Resources Business Partnering team will be present at formal meetings to provide advice and to ensure consistency of practice. Employees may ask to be accompanied at informal meetings. Requests will not be unreasonably refused.
- an employee who considers that formal action has been taken unreasonably will have the right to appeal. Formal action will be taken in accordance with the University's disciplinary policies or capability guidelines. Further information on these policies, and on the University's Time off Work guidelines, can be accessed by following the appropriate link:

[Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure for Academic Staff](#)
[Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure for Support Staff](#)
[Capability Guidelines](#)
[Time Off Work Guidelines](#)

5. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Notification

Where an employee is absent due to ill health they should, wherever possible, contact their line manager personally, by telephone or email (followed by personal telephone contact, wherever practical) on the first day of their absence and normally no later than one hour after their normal starting time. In the absence of the manager, employees should leave a message with the manager's deputy within their School or department. If the employee is unable to telephone then a member of the family or friend may telephone on their behalf.

Employees should state:

- when they became ill;
- the broad nature of their illness (e.g. migraine, chest infection);
- whether the illness is due to an accident or injury at work;
<https://my.uea.ac.uk/divisions/health-and-safety-department>
- whether they will be seeking medical attention;
- the likely date of return (if known).

Employees should continue to advise line managers of their absence at regular intervals as agreed with their line manager. It is important that employees notify their department of their absence, as unreported absences will be classed as unauthorised and appropriate action taken, which may include temporary suspension of sick pay. Pay will be re-instated for the full period upon receipt of appropriate certification.

5.2 Certification

An employee who falls ill after reporting for work should count the next day as the first day of sickness absence for pay purposes, whether this is a normal working day or not. Non-working days (including weekends, rest days and public holidays) should also be included when calculating the length of absence.

For Academic staff, sickness absence should be reported where it occurs on a day that forms part of the normal working pattern, even where attendance on campus was not planned.

In cases of ill health lasting seven days or less, a [Personal Sickness Certificate](#) should be completed, which should be submitted to the line manager who will forward it to Payroll (with a copy to the HR Support Centre). Alternatively, if your department is registered for self- service leave management you should record your absence details via [MyView](#).

For more than seven days, employees are required to obtain a Medical Statement from their General Practitioner (may be referred to as a Fit Note, Statement of Fitness for Work, Medical Statement or Medical Certificate) which should be submitted to the line manager who will forward it to Payroll (with a copy to the HR Support Centre).

Failure to provide certification to support a period of absence of eight days or more will be classed as unauthorised and appropriate action taken, which may result in the temporary suspension of sick pay and SSP until appropriate certification is received, at which point pay will be reinstated for the full period.

Fit notes allow GPs to suggest temporary changes to the employee's duties to assist them to return to work; they may list a number of common changes which can be made to an employee's position or workplace to assist them with a return to work, such as a phased return or altered hours.

When a Medical Statement is received with suggestions for consideration, a referral to Occupational Health must be made via the Associate Human Resources Business Partner.

This should take place before the employee returns to work. This will allow for a full assessment and discussion of the GPs suggestions, including consideration of whether or not they can be accommodated. During this time the employee will continue to receive sick pay in accordance with their contractual entitlement.

(See Section 16 Occupational Health Referrals)

6. MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Informal Return to Work Interview

Return to work interviews are one of the most effective measures in terms of improving attendance, providing an early opportunity for discussion and potential resolution of issues.

This interview, conducted by the line manager, should take place within 48 hours of the employee returning to work from any period of sickness absence, including short-term sickness of one day only. The meeting can take place in person or virtually via MS Teams depending upon the employee's work location profile. It provides an opportunity for the manager to ensure the employee is fit to be at work and, where appropriate, that appropriate help and support can be identified and implemented. It also allows the employee an opportunity to discuss any issues that may be affecting their health and attendance. It should be informal, and depending on the circumstances of the case, may cover any or all of the following issues:

- identification of support mechanisms that may be beneficial following a return to work;
- issues which may be affecting the employee's ability to attend work;
- potential involvement of University services, i.e. the Occupational Health Service or the Counselling Service, where this would be beneficial;
- a review of the employee's attendance record over the previous year;
- an assessment of whether any further action is necessary and an indication of what this action may be. This may include follow-up meetings where appropriate, to keep the channels of communication open and ensure that issues are being addressed.

A [Return to Work Interview Form](#) is available on the People and Culture website.

Details of the interview should be retained by the line manager.

6.2 Sickness Absence Records

The line manager is responsible for maintaining sickness absence records. A monthly return to Payroll of sickness absence must be made at the beginning of each month. This can be done on line by completing the Absence Return Form (Excel) available at: <https://my.uea.ac.uk/finance-documents-and-forms>

The completed form should be emailed to: payroll@uea.ac.uk

7. DELIBERATE FALSE DECLARATION OF SICKNESS ABSENCE

The deliberate false declaration of illness resulting in non-attendance at work may be regarded as gross misconduct, which may result in action being taken against the employee under the relevant disciplinary process.

8. SICKNESS ABSENCE AND ANNUAL LEAVE

An employee who falls sick during a period of annual leave will normally be required to provide a Medical Statement and will be regarded as being on sick leave from the date specified on the Statement. The employee may take the balance of holiday at a later date after returning to work and Associate HR Business Partner should be contacted to discuss how this will work in practice. Where the University requires a Medical Statement for an absence of less than seven days to support absence during annual leave, normally the cost will be met by the relevant department.

An employee may choose to take annual leave during a period of certified absence. In these circumstances the normal departmental process for request and authorisation of annual leave must be followed. The absence will then be recorded as annual leave and will count towards the annual leave entitlement.

9. PAYMENT DURING SICKNESS ABSENCE

Employees should refer to their Terms and Conditions of Appointment for information relating to contractual sick pay. Where possible, employees will be notified in advance before they are due to drop to half pay, and again when half pay is due to finish.

10. FREQUENT SHORT-TERM ABSENCE

Frequent short-term absence normally involves patterns of absence due to minor illnesses that are usually not connected. Such patterns could vary from a relatively large number of single days of absence, to fewer occasions involving a loss of up to a week or more, or a mixture of individual days and longer periods of absence. High levels of this type of absence may indicate problems which need to be explored and resolved.

The fact that a frequent short-term absentee is genuinely unwell does not mean the University can allow the situation to continue indefinitely. Frequent short-term absences are problematic as it is difficult to plan for their impact. The impact may therefore be substantial and can frequently disrupt the normal operation of a department, having a negative effect on work colleagues, students and other service users.

Sickness absence can be regarded as frequent short-term absence when it reaches **four periods of absence, usually of one week or less, in a six month period.** Employees are often unaware of how much absence they have had, and bringing it to their attention along with a discussion about factors that may be affecting their health can help lead to an early and informal resolution of the problem.

Therefore, **at the third short-term absence**, the line manager, during the return to work interview, should discuss the absence with the employee and alert them to the fact that the formal Sickness Absence Management process will be triggered if no improvement is made. A note should be kept locally to this effect with a copy given to the employee (Appendix A can be used as a template). For absences in relation to pregnancy or disability, the Associate HR Business Partner should be contacted for advice prior to discussion with the employee.

Where absence does not necessarily fit into the definition above e.g. a pattern of Mondays or Fridays, or regular absence before or after periods of leave, or reporting for work but then regularly going off sick part way through the day, the same approach should be used.

If attendance does not improve after this informal discussion, **when the fourth short-term absence** (or continuance of the pattern) – the trigger point - in the six month period is reached, the formal Sickness Absence Management process should be applied.

11. FORMAL SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Although it is important to treat each case on its merits and take care to respond in a sensitive manner, it is essential that managers apply the same framework to all employees. This means that whilst the same process should be followed, the outcome should be tailored to reflect the circumstances of each case.

At each stage of the process, the emphasis should be on counselling and support with a view to agreeing objectives to improve attendance. Depending on the circumstances of each case, this may necessitate a referral to Occupational Health for guidance, or initiation of other support mechanisms such as counselling, a review of working arrangements, or support with personal issues. However, if attendance does not improve, this may be treated as a capability issue, or, particularly where acceptable reasons cannot be given, a disciplinary issue. Where this is the case, while still part of the formal Absence Management process, the relevant University disciplinary or capability procedure will guide the initiation and conduct of the meeting, and the confirmation of any disciplinary sanctions or capability warnings.

Formal meetings can take place virtually or in person, depending upon the employee's work location profile, the nature of the case and the preferences of those involved.

11.1 Stage One

Where the trigger point has been reached the manager should arrange a meeting with the employee. An example of an invitation to a meeting is attached at Appendix B.

The discussion should allow an opportunity for each party to comment, exploring potential underlying reasons and contributory factors. The manager should gain a commitment to improve attendance and a review period should be agreed. This may be up to six months in the first instance. Where possible measures are identified which could support the employee and help to improve their attendance, the manager should agree to investigate these and implement them wherever practical.

The manager should follow up in writing to detail the outcome of the meeting, confirming the expectations and, depending on the circumstances of the case, what could happen if the expectations are not met (i.e. where acceptable reasons cannot be given, lack of a significant and sustained improvement may result in a disciplinary warning). An example letter is attached at Appendix C.

The manager will continue to monitor absence over the review period, making a diary note to ensure that a review with the Associate HR Business Partner takes place at the end of the agreed monitoring period.

11.2 Stage One Review

Where sufficient improvements have been made the manager should write to the employee to confirm that this is the case and that the process is at an end, with a summary of the reasons underpinning the decision. The manager should also state that attendance will continue to be monitored and deterioration over the next 12 months will result in the re-commencement of the procedure at Stage One Review.

Where an employee's attendance has not improved, the employee will be required to attend a Stage One Review Meeting and a letter to convene the meeting will be sent by the Associate HR Business Partner, outlining the reasons why.

The Associate HR Business Partner will be present at the meeting which will be progressed as a capability or disciplinary matter depending on the circumstances and the employee will be entitled to representation. Therefore, the letter to convene the meeting will contain the information required by the relevant process.

The meeting will allow discussion of the absence during the monitoring period to explore why expected improvements have not been met and will allow the manager, with advice from the Associate HR Business Partner, to decide whether:

- an adjournment to seek further information is required;
- a further period of monitoring is merited, or;
- formal action in the form of either a capability or disciplinary warning

Where an adjournment for further information or a further period of monitoring is agreed, this will be confirmed in writing and a follow-up Stage One Review Meeting, following the above format, will be convened at the appropriate time.

Where a capability or disciplinary warning is necessary, this signals progression to Stage Two and an appropriate review period will be set over which agreed attendance objectives will be monitored and reviewed. This review period will be determined according to individual circumstances.

Confirmation of progression to Stage Two, the relevant capability or disciplinary warning, the objectives set, the monitoring period, and the consequences of failure to improve (i.e. lack of a significant and sustained improvement may result in a final capability or disciplinary warning) will be confirmed in writing to the employee by the Associate HR Business Partner, not more than 10 working days after the meeting.

11.3 Stage Two

The manager will continue to monitor absence over the review period, making a diary note to ensure that a review with the Associate HR Business Partner takes place at the end of the agreed monitoring period.

11.4 Stage Two Review

Where sufficient improvements have been made the manager should write to the employee to confirm that this is the case and that the process is at an end with a summary of the reasons underpinning the decision. The manager should also state that attendance will continue to be monitored in accordance with the terms of the disciplinary or capability warning and any deterioration will result in the re-commencement of the procedure at Stage Two Review.

Where an employee's attendance has not improved, the employee will be required to attend a Stage Two Review Meeting. The process will be the same as the Stage One Review Meeting, set out above.

Where a (final) capability or disciplinary warning is necessary, this signals progression to Stage Three and an appropriate review period will be set over which agreed attendance objectives will be monitored and reviewed. This review period will be determined according to individual circumstances.

Confirmation of progression to Stage Three, the final capability or disciplinary warning, the objectives set, the monitoring period, and the consequences of failure to improve (i.e. lack of a significant and sustained improvement may result in termination of employment), will be confirmed in writing to the employee by the Associate HR Business Partner, not more than 10 working days after the meeting.

11.5 Stage Three

The manager will continue to monitor absence over the review period, making a diary note to ensure that a review with Associate HR Business Partner takes place at the end of the agreed monitoring period.

11.6 Stage Three Review

Where sufficient improvements have been made the manager should write to the employee to confirm that this is the case and that the process is at an end with a summary of the reasons underpinning the decision. The manager should also state that attendance will continue to be monitored in accordance with the terms of the disciplinary warning and any deterioration will result in the recommencement of the procedure at Stage Three Review.

Where an employee's attendance has not improved, the employee will be required to attend a Stage Three Review Meeting. The process will be the same as the Stage One Review Meeting, set out above.

Where attendance remains unsatisfactory and further capability or disciplinary action is merited the relevant capability or disciplinary procedure should be followed in relation to consideration of termination of appointment or other appropriate sanction.

12. LONG-TERM ABSENCE

The University defines absences for a period of four weeks or more as long-term. Given the complexities associated with the management of long-term absence, cases should be dealt with according to individual circumstances. It is impossible to be precise about how each case will be managed but there are some underpinning activities that are likely to be relevant to all long-term cases. The starting point for the line manager is to contact the Associate HR Business Partner for guidance.

A key part of the process in managing a person on long-term absence is to ensure that regular contact with the employee is maintained. The timing and nature of that contact will be appropriate to the situation and in consultation with the employee.

The outcome of a long-term sickness absence will be determined by the University on the basis of medical and other specialist advice and in consultation with the employee.

Outcomes

In consultation with the employee the outcomes of a long-term sickness absence may include:

- temporary reduction in responsibility and/or working hours to allow the employee to complete their recovery (see Section 13 Phased return to Work);
- a return to normal working, in which case the person will undertake the same range of duties and responsibilities they had before their absence;
- A return to their previous role but with permanent adjustments in working hours and/or duties and responsibilities to accommodate changes in ability levels. Such adjustments will be made in order to ensure compliance with the Equality Act (2010) as well as the University's wider commitments to equal opportunities and dignity at work (See Section 14 Disability);
- Redeployment to alternative employment, where available, if adjustments are not practical or affordable. This may involve a change in terms and conditions of employment (see Section 15);
- termination on the grounds of incapacity due to ill health. The University will endeavour to take all reasonable action to support employees returning to work. However, on some occasions the nature of the illness itself or its effects may mean that employees are unable to continue in their employment with the University. The Associate HR Business Partner will identify possible options and discuss them fully with the employee before a decision on termination of employment is taken. In such cases the employee may, subject to the rules of the relevant pension scheme, seek an ill-health retirement pension. The decision on whether to award an ill-health retirement pension rests entirely with the Trustees of the relevant pension scheme and the University has no role in deciding the outcome.

13. PHASED RETURN TO WORK

Following absence of four weeks or more, it may be possible for employees to return to work on a phased basis, following medical advice from their GP or Occupational Health. Occupational Health should be asked for advice on phased returns before

implementation to ensure that they are appropriate. A phased return may mean a temporary reduction in hours or a temporary reduction or alteration in duties, and normally lasts between two to four weeks.

Phased returns can take many forms and during the planning process the Associate HR Business Partner will advise the line manager and employee of any implications *inter alia* for sick pay, annual leave or unpaid leave. It should be remembered that it may not always be possible to agree with a suggested phased return due to the impact on the department and/or impact on other employees, even where recommended by Occupational Health.

It should be noted that all referrals to Occupational Health should be made by Human Resources and there is no facility for either employee or line management to organise referrals directly with Occupational Health.

14. DISABILITY

The University is required by law under the Equality Act, as well as the University's wider commitments to equal opportunities and dignity at work, to make reasonable adjustments to try to enable employees who develop or already have a disability to continue in employment. The University has created Code of Practice and Briefing Notes for staff and managers to raise awareness, provide information and guidance, and inform them about their responsibilities. They are located at this link under the disability section: <https://www.uea.ac.uk/about/university-information/university-policies/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-policies>

Where this is the case, the Associate HR Business Partner will arrange for a referral to Occupational Health for guidance in relation to potential adjustments. These might include adjustment of duties, reduction in working hours, and possibilities for redeployment. The guidance and advice from Occupational Health will be discussed with the line manager to assess whether it is possible to agree a plan with the employee.

15. REDEPLOYMENT

In some cases, following careful consideration by the line manager and consultation with the relevant Associate HR Business Partner, it may not be possible to make adjustments to an employee's current role. Wherever possible, the University is committed to make every effort to redeploy those employees who are unable to continue in their current post for reasons of ill health or disability.

HR Operational Services operates a Redeployment Register. Employees who are unable to continue in their current post for reasons of ill health or disability are eligible to join the Redeployment Register. Further information will be given to eligible individuals by the Associate HR Business Partner.

Where an employee is considered to be disabled under the definitions provided under the Equality Act, consideration will be given to waiving the competitive selection process for the post for which they apply, where there are no other applicants requiring similar consideration.

16. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH REFERRALS

The University may refer employees to Occupational Health at any point during their employment where their absence record suggests that this may be beneficial. Where a referral is necessary, the line manager will advise the employee and will then contact the Associate HR Business Partner to initiate the referral. An employee may approach the Associate HR Business Partner to arrange a self-referral. It should be noted, however, that all referrals should be made by People and Culture and there is no facility for either employee or line management to organise referrals directly with Occupational Health.

The referral will provide an opportunity to discuss the nature of the illness, consider the long-term prognosis, the likelihood and anticipated timescale of a return to work, and identify any forms of support or assistance that the University may be able to provide to facilitate a return to work. The outcome will be a confidential report to the Associate HR Business Partner and line manager.

Following an appointment with Occupational Health, it may be necessary to obtain further medical information or opinion. Requests for information will be made in accordance with the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 and with the prior consent of employee. Occupational Health will write formally requesting only specific and relevant information/opinion. The employee has the right to see the report prior to the GP or specialist returning it to Occupational Health, and the information will be released to Occupational Health only if the individual agrees with the content. This information will be kept confidentially within the Occupational Health Service. Only details relevant to the management of the case will be released to the Associate HR Business Partner after the Occupational Health Adviser has discussed the report with the employee.

It should be noted that where consent is withheld, the University will take reasonable action based on the available information available.

Please contact Occupational Health directly for further information.

17. WELLBEING AND SUPPORT

The People and Culture web pages host a range of wellbeing resources: <https://my.uea.ac.uk/departments/organisational-development/equality-diversity-inclusion-wellbeing/wellbeing>.

There is a link to the Health Assured website, the University's Employee Assistance Programme. They provide a 24-hour helpline to support employees through any of life's issues and problems and the website hosts a wide range of blogs, podcasts and webinars on health and wellbeing topics.

In addition, the pages provide information about the University's Staff Counselling Service. This is a free and confidential self-referral service for all employees.

18. STATUTORY SICK PAY (SSP)

See Appendix D.

19. INJURIES AT WORK

In cases of injury at work, the employee must complete an accident report form at the earliest possible opportunity and inform their manager.

People and Culture Division

March 2022

APPENDIX A

Template letter to summarise outcomes from manager's meeting

Name
Address

Date

Private and Confidential

Dear {name}

Further to our meeting on {date} to discuss your sickness absence, I write to confirm the outcomes of our discussion.

We discussed your attendance record and agreed that you have been absent from work on the following dates, which total X days on X episodes in the last X months:

-
-

We discussed the reasons for your absence, and the support that can be put in place to assist you {set out any specific actions}.

I advised you that a further absence within this current six-month period will trigger the formal Sickness Absence Management procedure and may be treated as a {disciplinary/capability} matter in accordance with the {relevant} process.

If there are any additional circumstances in connection with your sickness absence that you would wish to bring to my attention, please do not hesitate to do so.

Yours sincerely

{Line manager}

C.c. {Associate Human Resources Business Partner}

APPENDIX B
Template letter to initiate a Stage One Meeting

{Name}
{Address}

{Date}

Private and Confidential

Dear {name}

Meeting to discuss sickness absence – Stage One Meeting

I write to invite you to a meeting to discuss your sickness absence which has reached a level that triggers the formal University Sickness Absence Management process.

This follows our discussion concerning your sickness absence during your return-to-work meeting on {date}

The meeting will be held at {time} on {date} in {location}.

Full details of the process are available by following this link <https://my.uea.ac.uk/divisions/people-and-culture/human-resources/staff-resources/absence-and-leave/sick-leave> or in hard copy from your line manager.

Yours sincerely

{Line Manager}

Cc: {Associate Human Resources Business Partner}

APPENDIX C

Template letter to summarise outcomes from Stage One Meeting

Name
Address

Date

Private and Confidential

Dear {name}

Further to our meeting on {date} to discuss your sickness absence, I write to confirm the outcomes of our Stage One discussion.

The purpose of our meeting was to discuss your sickness absence which has reached a level that triggered the University's formal Sickness Absence Management process. You were accompanied to the meeting by {name}. We discussed your attendance record and agreed that you have been absent from work on the following dates, which total X days on X episodes in the last X months:

-
-

We discussed the reasons for your absence, and the support that can be put in place to assist you {set out any specific actions}.

I hope to see a significant and sustained improvement in your attendance. I informed you that, if over the next six months, you are absent for {target - e.g. three or more short-term} absences then I will need to review your sickness absence levels with the Associate HR Business Partner. If your attendance does not improve you will be required to attend a Stage One Review Meeting where, in the absence of a satisfactory explanation, continuing unsatisfactory absence may be treated as a disciplinary matter in accordance with the {relevant} disciplinary/capability process.

If there are any additional circumstances in connection with your sickness absence that you would wish to bring to my attention, please do not hesitate to do so.

Yours sincerely

{Line manager}

C.c. {Associate Human Resources Business Partner}

APPENDIX D

SICK PAY - STATUTORY SICK PAY (SSP)

Employers are responsible for paying Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) to employees who are certified as absent due to sickness for up to 28 weeks in any one continuous period or linked periods of sickness.

For the purposes of calculating SSP, sickness absence includes working days and non-working days (when the employee is not normally scheduled to work, such as weekends or public holidays). It is important that a complete record of periods of sickness is maintained. **A [Personal Sickness Certificate](#) must be completed by employees upon their return from sick leave and sent by managers immediately upon receipt directly to Payroll.** This form distinguishes the first day of sickness and first day of absence from work due to sickness, if such distinction is appropriate.

SSP is paid at a flat rate, determined by Government and reviewed annually. Where Occupational Sick Pay (OSP) and SSP are due for the same day, then one payment can be offset against the other. Where entitlement to OSP results in a payment which would be lower than SSP, the employee will receive a weekly payment equal to SSP at the prevailing rate. Entitlement to SSP will be in accordance with the statutory provision of 28 weeks, irrespective of contractual period for OSP. It has been agreed that there are seven qualifying days for all employees: for the purposes of calculating sick pay, all 7 days of the week count.

An employee who has received the maximum entitlement to SSP and who is still incapacitated may be able to claim a Social Security benefit. To ensure that the transition from SSP to a state benefit is uncomplicated, the employer is required to complete an SSP 1 Changeover form, which is sent directly to the employee by the University for him or her to complete and forward to the Department for Work and Pensions. The same form is used if an employee is excluded from SSP. Any member of staff who is approaching 28 weeks sickness absence will automatically be contacted by Payroll to initiate this process.

OSP is dependent on qualifying service and previous sick pay received. Information about qualification and length of OSP can be obtained from the relevant Terms and Conditions of Appointment. Periods of sick leave are aggregated within any span of twelve months. Further advice on sick pay calculation or entitlement can be obtained from the HR Support Centre.

During periods of SSP or nil pay, members of the pension schemes will have the option of either maintaining their pension contributions themselves or electing for Suspended Membership. A letter explaining the options available will be sent at the appropriate time to any pension scheme member to further explain these options.