



# Sickness Absence Guidance 2022-25

## **1. Introduction**

The University has a duty to support a healthy, safe and efficient working environment, not only through its obligations to comply with Health and Safety legislation, but also through its approach towards sickness absence management. The University places a high value on the health of all employees and is committed to encouraging, guiding and supporting employees to help them achieve and maintain good health.

This guidance refers to existing policies and procedures as outlined in the University's Occupational Sickness Absence Scheme and the Capability and Ill-Health Policy, applicable for all employees.

The broad aims of this guidance are to:

Provide a supportive environment for those employees affected by ill-health.

Provide a framework within which cases falling within the ambit of the Equality Act 2010 can be more readily identified and supported.

Ensure that a consistent and fair approach to the active management of sickness absence is adopted across the University.

Balance the interest of the individual and the operational needs of the University in cases of long-term sickness and debility.

Encourage and develop a positive culture towards managing sickness absence.

Any significant variations to this guidance will be made by the Chief Human Resources Officer in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor's Group.

## **2. Related documents**

The following documents are attached as Appendices to this guidance for ease of reference:

Occupational Sick Leave and Pay Scheme: **Appendix One**

Sickness Absence Certification form: **Appendix Two**

Make employees aware of support mechanisms available such as Occupational Health and counselling.

Heads and Directors of Department/Institute are responsible for managing sickness absence procedures within their areas of responsibility (with advice from Human Resources as required). Where the responsibilities are devolved to line managers, departmental arrangements should be such that the Head or Director of Department/Institute is kept fully informed of and approves any action taken in relation to the procedures.

### **3.2 Employees**

Whilst the University aims to secure the regular attendance of employees at work in order to meet contractual obligations it does, however, recognise that a level of absence may be necessary on medical grounds.

All employees have a responsibility under their contract of employment for upholding the sickness absence procedures and must inform, either personally or through a family member or friend, their line manager during the morning of the first day of absence giving the reason(s) for the absence and

Physician can be a helpful way for an employee to discuss any concerns they might have a



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Discuss the cause(s) of the absence and the likelihood of the illness recurring and/or impacting on the employee's role at work.

## **12. Capability and ill-health**

There may be occasions where an employee is unable to attend work to continue to perform effectively in their role due to their health, and/or due to the impact a condition may have on their physical or mental capabilities. In consultation with the employee, consideration will be given to possible employment adjustments and/or alternative approaches, including any redeployment opportunities.

Where an employee is able to attend work but there are capability and performance issues, the University's Capability and Ill-Health Policy will be followed. The Capability Policy outlines the procedure to be used in relation to ill health which, in this context, is defined as 'incapacity which affects the employee's capability to fulfil the requirements of their role'.

Occupational Health will be consulted before action is taken in all such cases, to seek medical guidance on the nature of the employee's condition.

## **13. The legal position: Disability in the Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act places responsibilities on employers where an employee suffers from a disability. In practical terms this means that the University is obliged to make reasonable adjustments to counter disadvantage from disability. What is 'reasonable' in this context will vary according to the circumstances and depends on the individual situation and the resources available. For example, it may not be practicable to fit lifts in a building for the use of one employee because the costs could be prohibitive. In this case, it might be more reasonable to resolve the problem by changing the employee's workstation to a more accessible location.



Where an employee is absent for a long period due to sickness they may enter a period of half-pay or no sick pay when their period of sickness pay is exhausted. In these circumstances, the employee will receive a letter from Human Resources confirming their sickness absence pay details. The employee will be required to provide medical certificates to certify their absence, even during a period of no pay and the University's Capability and Ill

**Can the University stop paying occupational sick pay?**

Yes. In certain situations, occupational sick pay will not be applicable or can be stopped where an individual has failed to follow the appropriate processes or has abused the provisions of the Occupational Sick Leave and Pay Scheme. Some examples might include:

Claiming sick pay when absent due to another reason, e.g. indicating absence due to ill-health when the employee is fit to work.

Being absent without leave/authorisation (also known as 'AWOL').

Failure to follow the sickness absence notification procedure e.g. failure to keep in contact with the University during a period of sickness absence or failure to provide appropriate sickness notification/sick notes or medical evidence or evidence of medical appointments.

Failure to attend Occupational Health appointments which have been arranged by the University (which might include attending an appointment in person or online).

Moving out of the UK whilst on sick leave without notifying the University.

Failing to adhere to the University's sickness absence procedures, Occupational Sick Pay procedures or the Capability and Ill-Health procedures.

Claiming sickness absence/sickness pay whilst the employee is engaged in other work during a period of sickness absence.

**If I am too unwell to contact my manager personally, what should I do?**

In exceptional cases where it is not possible for you to contact your manager (i.e. because you are too unwell or in hospital), a relative or friend should contact the manager.

**Do I have to confirm with my manager the nature of my ill-health?**

You are expected to indicate to your manager the nature of the reasons for your ill-health (e.g. chest infection, cold, migraine) and the likely duration of your sickness absence and/or the reasons for a period of on-going ill-health. This will enable your manager to put in place appropriate cover arrangements and to manage your absence effectively.

**Can I take time off work to attend a doctor or dentist appointment?**

Time off to attend medical appointments is not recorded as sickness absence. Whenever possible, appointments should be made outside regular working hours or at the start or end of the working day (although it is recognised that this is not always possible).

**How will I receive**

## **18.2 For Managers**

### **If a member of staff advises that they are too unwell to attend work, what should I do?**

When a member of your team advises that they cannot attend work due to illness, you should show concern and support. Should the absence be likely to continue beyond one day, you should agree with the employee the way in which you can both maintain contact and the frequency of your contact. You should ask the employee to complete a Sickness Absence Self-Certification form for absence of

**APPENDIX ONE**  
**Occupational Sick Leave and Pay Scheme**  
(Extract from Terms and Conditions of Service)

**Occupational Sick Leave and Pay**

Because it is not a legal entitlement, the University can decide the terms under which you can receive Occupational Sick Pay which may include working for the University for a certain amount of time, providing evidence of sickness absence in the form of Fit notes and/or evidence of medical appointments/treatment. Failure to provide medical certification may lead to the period of sickness absence being unpaid.

Subject to the provisions of the scheme including sickness absence certification, if you are absent because you are ill, and this includes injury or other disability, occupational sick pay is outlined according to the following scale, subject to the provision of appropriate medical certification:

Scale of Payments based on actual continuous service

Period	Occupational sick pay
During 1st year of service	



## APPENDIX TWO





**RETURN TO WORK MEETING FOLLOWING A PERIOD OF SICKNESS ABSENCE**

**For completion by the employee's line manager, in liaison with the employee.**

**Date of meeting:**

**Notes or information taken during the meeting:**

