



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**

This guidance is supported by the following documents which are available on the Human Resources page of the University's intranet:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Policy for Managing Stress
- Capability Policy and Capability and Ill-Health
- Equality and Diversity Policy

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Managers

Managers at all levels of the University are responsible for the implementation of the University's sickness absence procedures and for monitoring sickness absence in their areas of responsibility.

Managers will:

- Provide a safe working environment and consider the health and wellbeing of employees at all times.
- Ensure that employees are aware of the correct absence and notification procedures.
- Be a point of contact when employees are off work due to sickness absence.
- Undertake return to work meetings promptly, completing return to work notes for recording purposes.
- Support employees with any reasonable adjustments suggested by a GP or advice received from Occupational Health (for example, an altered working pattern, temporary reduction in working hours).
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that employees are fit for work and ask them to go home and/or seek medical advice if they appear unfit for work.

- 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 some prognosis as to the likely duration. Thereafter, the manager should be kept informed of the progress of the illness and the likely date of return. Employees will:

- Follow the sickness absence guidance and procedures, recording all periods of sickness absence in a timely manner.
- Maintain contact with their line manager during a period of sickness absence.
- Provide self-certificated sickness notes or 'Statement of Fitness for Work' notes (known as 'Fit notes') as applicable.
- Attend meetings relating to the sickness absence procedures e.g. return to work meetings.
- Stay away from work when unwell or when it is likely that ill-health will affect the health of others.
- Refrain from undertaking activities during sickness absence that are not conducive to a recovery and return to work.

3.3 Human Resources

The Human Resources team will provide advice on dealing with any issues arising from the implementation of the sickness absence procedures, including advice on how best to proceed in any particular case. Human Resources will:

- Provide managers with guidance and support throughout the sickness absence process.
- Provide employees with advice on the sickness absence procedures and their entitlements.
- Advise on what further information should be sought e.g. from Occupational Health.
- Advise the manager on the most appropriate course of action for the employee.
- Support the provision of appropriate training for managers on the effective and fair management of sickness absence.

The Human Resources Managers/Officers within the Human Resources team take a role in monitoring sickness absence which helps to ensure that any trends or potential problems are identified that may need early remedial action and/or to highlight possible areas of concern with regard to health and safety issues.

3.4 Trade Unions

Trade Union representatives will advise employees who are their members at any stage of the procedures. In particular Trade Unions will:

- At the member's request, support employees at formal meetings connected with the sickness absence procedures should the employee wish to be accompanied.
- Contribute to the development of, and/or review, the sickness absence guidelines and procedures.

3.5 Referrals to Occupational Health

The University's sickness absence procedures, including pre-employment health checks, are supported by an Occupational Health provider. A referral to meet with an Occupational Health

Physician can be a helpful way for an employee to discuss any concerns they might have about the impact of a health problem on their capacity to work and/or the impact of the work environment on their health.

As a guideline, where an employee loses five per cent or more of their contracted working hours due to sickness absence, the situation will automatically be reviewed by the line manager and Human Resources who may refer to Occupational Health. Each case will be examined on its own merits. Where required, line managers will refer to the Capability and Ill-Health procedure.

Where an employee is absent from work frequently or for a long period due to sickness absence, the University can request that they see an Occupational Health Physician and this may include making contact with the employee's GP or Consultant on their medical condition and any likely medium-term or long-term outcome.

In consultation with the employee, a referral to meet with an Occupational Health Physician will be arranged by the Chief Human Resources Officer or a Human Resources Officer/Manager.

An Occupational Health Physician will:

- Take into account the employee's health/illness and the functional requirements of their work.
- Provide specialist medical advice to the employee and the University.
- Identify where an underlying medical condition exists and provide advice in relation to the condition and the impact on the employee.
- Support the employee's return to work and/or their continued attendance at work.
- Provide advice on any reasonable adjustments to be considered, where appropriate.
- Undertake further reviews depending on the particular circumstances of the individual.

Written consent may be sought from the employee to request medical reports from their GP or Consultant to assist the Occupational Health Physician with the assessment. After assessment, advice will be provided in the form of a case management report that will be forwarded to the University (i.e. the referring Human Resources Officer/Manager or Chief Human Resources Officer). The employee will be invited to attend a meeting with their manager/Human Resources Officer/Manager to discuss the content of the report and to follow up any recommendations and/or advice provided.

4. Sickness notification

Where an employee is unable to attend work due to ill-health, they are required to contact their manager to let them know that they are away from work – this should be done no later than 9.00am on the first day of absence. If the employee's manager is not available, a message should be left with the department administrator or another colleague. Where an employee is too ill to make contact, or where they are unable for health reasons (e.g. if in hospital) to make contact, the employee should ask a family member or friend to contact the line manager.

The employee's manager will need to know:

- the reason(s) for the sickness absence;
- the expected duration of the sickness absence or expected date of return to work;
- contact details in the event that the department/manager needs to make contact;
- whether the reason for absence is work-related, including any accident at work.

Employees are required to make contact with their manager each day they are away due to illness, unless they have made other arrangements with their manager (e.g. when signed off work for a designated period or as described in point 5: Maintaining contact).

5. Maintaining contact

Employees are paid on the basis of satisfactory attendance and performance, in accordance with their contracts of employment. If the employee does not come in to work when expected, the line manager will contact the employee by telephone or via email to ascertain the reasons why they are not at work. Keeping in contact during a period of sickness absence allows managers to be aware of changes in an employee's circumstances, enabling the manager to offer appropriate support and keep the

employee informed of developments within the workplace. It also helps in relation to planning workload, managing cover arrangements and making preparations for an employee's return. This is particularly important where the employee is absent for an extended period of time.

Managers should ensure that any contact is reasonable and necessary. It is advisable to explain to the employee why there is a need to keep in contact and to agree with them an appropriate way to keep in contact e.g. by telephone, letter, email or text message (depending on an individual's circumstances/preferences). For example, following an initial discussion, an absent employee submits a fit note for two weeks duration. The manager may agree that the employee will make contact towards the end of the two week period to confirm their return to work or extension of sickness absence.

6. Sickness certification

The term **Short-term sickness absence** refers to absence of usually one or two days or for periods of up to seven days that are self-certificated.

The term **Long-term sickness absence** refers to a period of sickness absence of four or more weeks duration, covered by a medical certificate.

Employees will need to provide evidence for the reason for their sickness absence and the type of evidence will depend upon the number of days that an employee is unfit for work, as follows:

6.1 Self-certificated sickness absence – If the absence is for seven calendar days or less, employees are required to complete a self-certification on their return to work which is available on the Human Resources page on the Intranet (a copy is attached for reference as Appendix Two). This will need to be signed by the employee's manager and the employee as part of the employee's return to work meeting before forwarding to Human Resources for recording purposes. The employee should also report their self-certificated sickness absence online via the HR self-service portal.

6.2 Statement of Fitness for Work or 'Fit Note' - If the absence due to sickness continues beyond seven calendar days, the employee must obtain a medical certificate from their GP. This is known as a 'Statement of Fitness for Work' or 'Fit Note'. The Statement provided by a GP will provide clear and practical advice including whether the employee is either:

Not fit for work – this means that the assessment of the employee is that they have a health condition that prevents them from working for the stated period of time; or

May be fit for work taking account of the following advice – this means the assessment of an employee is that their condition does not necessarily stop them from returning to work, however, they may not be able to complete all of their normal duties, or they could benefit from amended working hours. Where it is not possible to provide the recommended support for an employee to return to work, the Statement will be used as if the GP had advised 'not fit for work'. The employee does not need to return to their GP for a new Statement to confirm this.

Where a GP has advised that an employee **may be fit for work** they will include some comments on their patient's condition and where appropriate, will tick one or more of the four tick boxes on the Statement. These are common ways to help someone with a health condition return to work. The tick boxes are:

Phased return to work – a GP will recommend this where they believe that the employee may benefit from a gradual increase in the intensity of their work duties or their working hours. This is usually for a short period of time, generally a number of weeks (e.g. up to four weeks) and will be looked at on a case by case basis, for example:

- An employee following an operation could return to work on reduced hours, gradually increasing to their normal hours over an agreed period of time (e.g. over a week or two); or

- An employee with a back or shoulder problem, whose job involves lifting, gradually increases the quantity or intensity of their work. This could help them return to work earlier whilst rebuilding their capacity for manual work.

Altered hours – A GP will recommend this where they believe that the employee will benefit from a change to the hours that they work, in order for them to return to work. This does not necessarily mean working fewer hours, e.g:

- Providing the option to start (and/or leave) later could support someone who is unable to drive and struggles with rush hour public transport, to continue working.
- Allowing more flexible hours could support someone who is still receiving treatment to return to work and attend treatment sessions during working hours.

Amended duties – a GP will recommend this where they believe the employee may be able to return to work if their duties are amended to take into account their condition, e.g:

- Removing heavy lifting from the job role of someone who has a back injury could help them return to work whilst recovering from their injury.
- Reducing or removing a more pressured part of a job role (such as dealing with complaints), could help someone off work with stress to return to work.

Workplace adaptations – A GP will recommend this where they believe an employee may be able to return to work if their workplace is adapted to take into account their condition, e.g:

- A ground floor workstation for an individual who has problems going up and down stairs (this may occur in cases of arthritis, for example).
- Arranging for a parking space near the entrance to the workplace could help someone who has reduced mobility post-surgery or treatment, to return to work.

In determining what action a manager is able to take as a result of advice given in a Fit Note, consideration needs to be given as to whether a workplace risk assessment is required. It will be helpful to discuss this process with the employee and to involve the University's Environmental Health and Safety Manager as necessary.

7. Return to work meetings

When an employee returns to work following any period of sickness absence they will have a return to work meeting with their manager. All return to work meetings should be carried out in a supportive manner. The purpose of a return to work meeting is to:

- Welcome the employee back to work.
- Seek confirmation that the individual is fit to work.
- Seek the medical cause(s) of absence giving the employee the opportunity to highlight any relevant issues.
- If the employee raises any issues, try to offer solutions and, if appropriate, refer for further support e.g. Occupational Health.
- Check that the employee has supplied any outstanding sickness absence certificates.
- Check whether the absence is being considered under the correct policy e.g. if the absence was to care for a dependent in an emergency this would be covered by the Special Leave provisions.
- Update the employee on any developments that have occurred during their absence and/or how their work has been covered in their absence.

Where there are on-going health issues, managers will:

- Be clear that the purpose of the meeting is to provide support to the individual in his/her return to work.

- Discuss the cause(s) of the absence and the likelihood of the illness recurring and/or impacting on the employee's role at work.
- Establish whether there are any underlying personal or work-related concerns e.g. stress, relationship issues.
- Establish if any 'reasonable adjustments' are required to the employee's role and/or work environment when highlighted by a Doctor/GP or Occupational Health.
- Be available to talk to/meet with the employee, should they have any issues following the return to work meeting.

A brief note may be taken during a return to work meeting which should be shared with the employee, e.g. to note requests for any adjustments on return to work or any actions required. The manager should use the return to work form (attached to the sickness certification) for these notes. All return to work forms are stored in a confidential manner in line with the Data Protection Act, a copy of which should be returned to the Human Resources Department.

8. Notifiable diseases

If an employee is away from work because they have an infectious notifiable disease, they should inform their line manager who will contact the campus Nurse or Health and Safety Officer for further advice. The University will contact the Occupational Health Physician for further guidance and advice as required.

9. Rehabilitation and phased return to work

Where an employee has been absent from work due to sickness and an Occupational Health Physician or a GP has recommended a phased return to work, this will be discussed between the manager and the employee and will be subject to agreement relative to the timescale, duties and working arrangements. A phased return to work will normally not exceed four weeks, bearing in mind the need for a degree of flexibility where an employee's progress might be difficult to predetermine. Where an extension to a phased return to work is envisaged, further medical certificates and/or Occupational Health advice may be required.

10. Sickness absence relating to maternity

Where an employee requires support and guidance relating to illness during pregnancy, further information is available in the Maternity Factsheet available via the Intranet on the Human Resources page.

11. Sickness and annual leave

An employee who falls sick during the course of annual leave is considered as being on sick leave from the date specified in a 'Statement of Fitness for Work' note supplied by a registered GP, or on a Self-Certification of Sickness Absence Form, provided that they have followed the procedure within this paragraph:

Whilst on annual leave employees on annual leave must inform their manager of their sickness, unless this is not reasonably practicable, on the first day of sickness by telephone, e-mail, text message or letter and provide a Statement of Fitness for Work, or Self-Certification of Sickness Absence Form covering the full period of sickness absence. Where this process has been followed an employee will be entitled to take the balance of their annual leave at a later date after returning to work, providing the balance of the annual leave is taken, wherever possible, before the end of the leave year. Where it is not feasible for the leave to be taken within the current leave year, the manager should agree for the leave to be carried over into the next leave year and to be taken as soon as possible.

Employees continue to accrue holiday entitlement during sickness absence periods as though they are at work. Where a member of staff is prevented from taking their annual leave by the end of a holiday year due to their sickness absence, or where holidays are accrued during sickness absence, or where they are claimed back where ill-health interrupted a period of annual leave, they must be taken within twelve months of returning to work. It is often helpful, depending on department requirements, to agree an employee's accrued annual leave entitlement will be taken at the end of a period of sick leave. When taken, accrued annual leave will be paid at the normal rate of pay, regardless of whether the member of staff is on full pay, half pay, statutory sick pay, or no pay at all.

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.

Further examples of possible reasonable adjustments include:

- Doing things another way e.g. allowing someone with social anxiety disorder to have their own desk instead of hot-desking.
- Making physical changes to the environment e.g. installing a ramp for a wheelchair user or an audio-visual fire alarm for a deaf person.
- Supporting a disabled person to work somewhere else e.g. on the ground floor for a wheelchair user.
- Providing specialist equipment e.g. an adaptive keyboard for a person with arthritis.
- Being more flexible about working hours, possibly allowing additional time off work for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment.

In some circumstances what is reasonable extends beyond workplace adjustments, to steps such as funding private counselling, if that will help an employee deal with the pressures of work.

The University's Occupational Health providers will advise whether a disability within the remit of the Equality Act applies to an individual and will indicate the reasonable adjustments to be considered.

14. Pay during sickness absence

There are two standard forms of sick pay: Statutory Sick Pay (known as 'SSP') – the minimum amount that an employee is legally entitled to; and Occupational Sick Pay – additional or more generous sick pay provided by the University.

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. The Occupational Sick Pay Scheme is attached as Appendix One and is also available from the Human Resources page of the Intranet and in terms and conditions of employment.

To pay Occupational Sick Pay, evidence must be provided when requested. Employees on long-term sickness absence should ensure they remain contactable and available to attend appointments with Occupational Health. Where an employee refuses to attend an occupational health appointment, managers will make decisions based on the evidence they have received without having the benefit of any additional input from the OH provider.

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-Health Policy will be followed.

15. Pay during annual leave

Where an employee is sick during a period of annual leave (or if a pre-booked period of personal annual leave falls whilst an employee is off sick) they cannot receive both sick pay and holiday pay for the same period of time, nor is it appropriate to allow an employee to re-designate a period of sick leave as annual leave simply to avoid loss of pay where they are not eligible to receive or have exhausted their sick pay.

16. Pay during a phased return to work/altered hours

Based on agreed working hours and irrespective of the stage at which the phased return takes place, during the first four weeks of a phased return, payment will be at full pay. In respect of any further agreed extension of phased return beyond four weeks, payment will be pro rata to hours worked, unless an extension of the phased return to work is envisaged and/or recommended by a GP/Occupational Health.

17. Access to further support

Further support is provided for employees in terms of managing their own health and well-being. A range of opportunities are provided as part of the University's staff development provision, for example:

- Developing Wellbeing and Performance at Work
- Managing Wellbeing and Building Personal Resilience
- Mental 'de-clutter' workshops
- Staff Health MOT's
- Wellbeing drop-in sessions/well-being events
- Flu Innoculations (on-campus vaccination free to all staff)
- Advice and guidance on managing sickness absence

The Tudor Hale Centre for Sport offers a range of opportunities for staff to keep fit and a helpful service is provided for sporting-related injuries via the Sports Performance and Rehabilitation Unit (SPRU).

17.1 Useful contacts:

- SPRU: (Details at time of issue): ext 6057
- Tudor Hale Centre for Sport: ext 6057
- Support and/or queries relating to Maternity and ill-health: Lucy Harper, ext 6350
- Referrals for external counselling support and/or Occupational Health Physician:
 - Elisabeth Whitaker, Chief Human Resources Officer, ext 6119
 - Helen Girling, HR Manager, ext 6120
 - Charlotte Meneely, HR Manager, ext 6320
 - Kevin Botto, HR/Professional Development Manager, ext 6047
- Information on relevant staff development events: HR/Staff Development Adviser: Natasha Loveday, ext 6248
- Advice on sickness absence pay: Yvonne Young, Payroll and Benefits Officer, ext 6115
- Advice/guidance relating to health and safety or accidents at work: Kevin Hickman, Environmental Health and Safety Manager, ext 6488.

18. Frequently asked questions

18.1 For employees

Do I have to report my absence from work due to sickness?

Yes. Sickness notification is a contractual requirement. Failure to follow the sickness reporting requirements may lead to pay being deducted for the days on which an employee has not reported their absence.

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).

Can I return to work before the date indicated on my last medical certificate?

If you decide to return to work before your medical certificate expires the University would expect it to be with the consent of your Doctor/GP. In some circumstances an employee may be asked to attend an appointment with Occupational Health as a precautionary measure in order to ensure that the employee is fit to undertake the duties of their post. When an employee is signed off-work due to ill-health, they should follow their GP's advice and refrain from attending work in line with the Statement of Fitness for Work.

What is considered a day's sickness?

Sickness absence is recorded on a full or half day basis, rounded up to the nearest half day.

Can I refuse to attend an appointment with Occupational Health?

No. Employees should attend occupational health appointments arranged by the University as outlined to the employee in writing.

It is in your interests that Occupational Health provides advice to you and the University based on all the relevant facts. You are advised to attend an occupational health appointment so that an appropriate assessment of your health can be undertaken. If you refuse to attend an appointment, the University will have no choice but to take decisions based on the incomplete information that is available and this might not be in the best interests of your health and wellbeing.

How will I receive my pay slip when I am absent due to ill-health?

Pay slips are accessed by individuals via self-service (through HR self-service). If you are not able to access your pay slip during a period of long-term sickness absence, you should contact the Payroll/Pensions Manager on 01243 816115 who will seek to provide you with a paper copy.

Should I take sick leave to care for a dependent?

No. You should only confirm that you are sick and therefore have to take a period of sickness absence if you are unwell. The University has other policies in place to cover these circumstances e.g. emergency time off for dependents. Please contact Human Resources for further advice.

Can I undertake any form of alternative work, in addition to my University post, when signed 'unfit' for work?

No. During a period of sickness absence you should not undertake any form of paid work. Where part-time staff are employed in two roles (i.e. one in the University and another role not connected with the University) it is anticipated that if the individual is unwell, they would not be able to attend either employment (unless exceptionally the ill health relates to a specific job role).

My GP has noted 'may be fit for work' on my 'fit' note – what does this mean?

This means that your GP has considered that you may be fit to attend work to carry out some of your responsibilities. You should discuss with your manager and agree whether it is possible for you. It may not be possible or practical for you to undertake partial and/or amended duties (depending on the role you undertake) and in this case the University will treat the certificate as 'not fit for work'. You will not need to return to your GP for a new fit note to confirm this but you should remain in regular contact with your manager to review the situation.

What should I do if I have an infectious notifiable disease?

If you are away from work because you have an infectious notifiable disease (e.g. Measles, Mumps, Scarlet Fever) you should inform your manager who will contact the University's Nurse/Health Adviser or the Environmental Health and Safety Officer for further advice. It is helpful to inform Human Resources so that Occupational Health can be contacted for further advice if required. Further information on what constitutes a notifiable disease is available via www.gov.uk.

I only started work at the University four weeks ago and I have taken a period of certificated sickness absence. Am I entitled to occupational sick pay?

The University's Occupational Sickness Pay Scheme is based on continuous length of service and the provision of sickness absence certificates, as follows:

Period	Sickness pay
During 1st year of service	1 month's full pay and (after completing 4 months' service) 2 months' half pay;
During 2nd year of service	3 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay;
During 3rd year of service	4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay;
During 4th and subsequent years	6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay.

Where sickness absence certificates are not provided, the University is not obliged to offer occupational sick pay.

The sickness absence guidelines talk about 'return to work meetings' – why are these necessary?

A return to work meeting will normally take the form of a conversation with your line manager who will find out how you are, bring you up to date with work and any changes and make sure that you are well enough to return. Your manager will ask you for any outstanding sickness certificates where these have not been obtained previously and may make a brief note of the outcomes of the discussion.

It is good practice to hold a discussion with an employee returning from sickness absence and meetings are considered to be informal. Confidentiality and data protection obligations will be applied.

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 seven days or less, or to provide a Statement of Fitness for Work signed by their Doctor/GP. Both should be passed to Human Resources for recording purposes.

Can I seek information from an employee about their ill health?

You are expected to ask and be given the nature of their illness (e.g. cough, cold, migraine, chest infection) so that their absence can be managed effectively and a return to work can be supported. Employees should be open with their managers about the reasons for their ill-health, or on-going ill-health, so as to ensure they are provided with support.

What should I do if I think that there is a potential cause for concern in relation to an individual's absence/health?

There may be a number of reasons indicating that there may be a potential cause for concern. For example: a pattern appears to be present e.g. regular absences on a Monday or Friday; there are concerns that the absence is not genuinely due to sickness; or there is a possibility of an underlying health issue. In such cases, any concerns should be explored with the employee as part of a return to work meeting. Such discussions are an important opportunity to support the individual, by ensuring that any appropriate support/intervention is considered and implemented as soon as possible. You can also get in touch with your lead Human Resources Officer for further advice as required.

Can I request that an employee provides a 'fit note' even if the period of absence concerned is less than seven days in duration?

This may be appropriate in some cases, for example a manager will require an individual to provide a 'Fit note' or other appropriate medical evidence from a recognised medical practitioner if they are seeking to reclaim a period of annual leave due to sickness/injury.

What should I do if a member of my team provides/ notifies me that they have a statement confirming that they are 'not fit for work'?

This means that the Doctor/GP's assessment of the individual is that they have a health condition that prevents them from working for the stated period of time. Unless otherwise stated, the presumption will be that they return to work after the specified date. Depending on the nature and length of absence it may also be appropriate to contact the individual to agree when the situation will be reviewed, identify any sources of potential support, and if possible a return to work date.

Having received a 'may be fit note' what should I do in determining if a return to work can be safely and reasonably supported?

You may determine in liaison with your Human Resources Officer/contact that it is not possible or reasonable for the department to facilitate a return to work. For example: due to increased risks that cannot be reduced or removed. If so, you should discuss this with the individual, keep a record as to the reasons why this is the case and treat the note from the GP as 'not fit for work'. The individual will NOT need to return to their GP for a new note to confirm this. Both the manager and employee should remain in regular contact to review the situation.

Where can I access support in relation to managing sickness absence?

You can contact an HR Officer for advice. You can also attend a training session 'Guidance on Managing Sickness Absence' which will provide advice on legal and practical implications, information relating to the Equality Act 2010, making 'reasonable adjustments', and managing complex cases. Further information can be accessed via the Professional Development Team.

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	1 month's full pay and (after completing 4 months' service) 2 months' half pay;
During 2nd year of service	3 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay;
During 3rd year of service	4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay;
During 4th and subsequent years	6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay.

The University has the discretion to extend the scheme in individual cases. For the purposes of this paragraph, a 'working day' means any day on which the University is open but which does not form part of your personal holiday entitlement.

Where appropriate your sick pay will include, Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), and will not be more than your full (ordinary) pay (see 'Sickness' in the Employee Handbook, available on the Intranet, for details of SSP).

The rate of your allowance and the period over which it is to be paid will be calculated by adding together all periods of sickness absence during the 12 months immediately preceding the first day of your absence. You must have completed 4 calendar months' actual service before you are able to claim half pay.

Under the sickness scheme, 'service' means any period of employment with the University and any other period of employment that the University may approve.

The following deductions will be made from your sick pay where it equals your full pay:

- a) any state benefits that you may receive in respect of the first three days of your sickness absence
- b) the dependency element, but not the disability element, of any treatment allowance received from the Benefits Agency

If your sick pay is less than your full pay and you would otherwise receive state benefits which, added to your sick pay, would give you more than your normal (ordinary) pay, your pay will be reduced by the amount that state benefits exceed your normal (ordinary) pay.

Even if your position under National Insurance regulations means that you are not entitled to benefit at the full rate, you will be regarded under this scheme as eligible to receive benefit at the full rate.

The deductions mentioned in this document will be made, regardless of whether you have taken the steps to claim any benefits, payments or allowances to which you may be entitled.

Under this scheme you are required to declare to the University your entitlement to any benefits, payments or allowances and to keep the University informed of any changes in your circumstances affecting your entitlement. If you fail to make an appropriate declaration, the University will be entitled to determine the benefit by reference to the maximum benefit to which you appear entitled under the statutory provisions governing such benefits.

Deductions equivalent to those set out above, will be made from your sick pay if you are a married woman or a widow and you have elected to pay reduced National Insurance contributions, unless you are receiving a widow's or widowed mother's allowance or widow's pension, when your sick pay will be calculated on the amount that the national insurance benefit you are eligible to receive exceeds what you receive from the Department for Work and Pensions in weeks of full normal employment.

If you are sick during a period when the University is closed or during a period within your own personal holiday entitlement, this will not affect your entitlement to sick leave but it will be relevant so far as deduction of benefit is concerned. The rate of sick pay applicable during a period of closure or a period forming part of your personal holiday entitlement is the rate of pay that applied to the last day before you became sick.

If you are ill immediately before a period of closure or before a period of personal holiday and you are on full sick pay or half sick pay, you will continue on sick pay but the closure or holiday period will not be counted against your entitlement as specified above.

If you have exhausted your sick pay before the closure or holiday period and are not receiving any pay, you will continue to receive no pay.

Sick pay will be calculated taking into account your 'normal' pay, including any regular overtime payments and/or any regular allowances made to you under your contract of employment.

Where you are receiving half pay or no pay you may return to full pay if you recover during the period of closure or personal holiday period and obtain a doctor's medical statement confirming that you are medically fit to return to work, and that you do actually return to work on the first day after the period of closure or personal holiday entitlement.

If you fall ill during a period of closure or a period forming part of your personal holiday entitlement and become entitled to SSP, or to claim other benefits referred to above, you must inform the University so that Statutory Sick Pay may be paid (where appropriate) or appropriate deductions made.

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.

APPENDIX TWO
Sickness Absence Certification Form

For completion by the employee:

SURNAME (in capitals):

FORENAME (in capitals):

ROLE AND DEPARTMENT:

LAST WORKING DAY:

FIRST DAY OF SICKNESS ABSENCE:

LAST DAY OF SICKNESS ABSENCE:

DATE RESUMED WORK:

Please ensure that this certification is returned to your lead Human Resources Officer/Chief Human Resources Officer/Manager, under confidential cover.

The following sections must be completed for any period of absence that is due to sickness and/or injury:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1. Is/was your absence solely or mainly due to pregnancy? | YES/NO |
| 2. Has your sickness occurred as a result of an injury at work? | YES/NO |
| a. If yes, have you completed an accident report form? | YES/NO |
| b. Date accident report form completed (if applicable) | |
| 3. Is/was your absence solely or partly linked to a disability you may have i.e. covered under the Equality Act 2010? | YES/NO |
| 4. Have you consulted your Doctor/GP about this episode of sickness? | YES/NO |
| 5. Have you attached a Doctor/GP's Certificate with this form? | YES/NO |

(All sickness absence greater than 7 calendar days must be covered by a Certificate of Statement of Fitness for Work signed by the employee's Doctor/GP).

5a. If Yes has the Doctor/GP advised (please tick as appropriate):

- You are not fit for work
- You may be fit for work taking into account specific advice
- Amended duties/workplace adaptations
- A phased return to work/altered hours

DETAILS OF SICKNESS ABSENCE

The information provided will be made available to your line manager and Human Resources staff only. Personal data collected by the Human Resources Department will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Employment Practices Data Protection Code (2002). Details of the nature of the illness or other personal information will be stored separately from absence records. The information collected will be used for internal purposes only and in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy, which is available on the University's Intranet. All personal data will be stored in such a way that access is only permitted by authorised personnel. The information provided on this form may be used anonymously for statistical and/or trend analysis. By completing and signing this form you are taken to consent to the processing of your personal data. For further details regarding the processing of personal data, please refer to the University's Data Protection Policy.

Please tick one box:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cough, Cold or Flu | (e.g. Flu-like symptoms, sore throat, cold) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Headache/Migraine | (e.g. Concussion, Headache, Migraine) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Ear, Eye, Nose Throat or Dental Problems | (e.g. eye, ear infections, Tinnitus, Tonsillitis, Vertigo, toothache) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Digestive Disorder | (e.g. Stomach upset, Diarrhoea, Food Poisoning, Vomiting/Nausea) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Diabetes and other Endocrine/Glandular Problems | (e.g. Thyroid, metabolic problems) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Respiratory Conditions | (e.g. Asthma, Chest Infection, Pneumonia) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cardiac/Circulatory/Blood Disorders | (e.g. Anaemia, Chest Pain, Heart Attack, Hypertension, Stroke) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Genito-Urinary | (e.g. Gynaecological Problems, Pre-Menstrual Tension, Urinary Infection) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Musculo Skeletal | (e.g. Arthritis, Back Pain, Broken Bone, Sciatica) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Infectious Diseases | (e.g. Chicken Pox, Measles, Mumps, Meningitis) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Nervous System Disorders | (e.g. Alzheimer's Disease, Dementia, Multiple Sclerosis) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mental Health/Psychological Disorders | (e.g. Anxiety, Stress, Depression, Mental Illness, Alcohol/Drug Dependency) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cancers and Tumours | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Skin Disorders | (e.g. Psoriasis, Eczema) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pregnancy Related Condition | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Medical Conditions (please specify) | (e.g. Allergies, Blackouts, HIV) |

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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:

Please indicate below any temporary revised working arrangements contained within the Statement of Fitness for Work, if applicable. It is important to include specific arrangements that you have agreed with the employee against each/any recommendations. Please also provide specific reasons for any recommendations you are unable to agree to implement (please refer to an HR Officer/HR Manager for further advice if this is the case).

Review date of any temporary revised working arrangements agreed:

A phased return to work

Altered hours

Amended duties

Work place adaptations

Risk assessment (contact Health and Safety)

If it is felt further guidance would be helpful to support the employee's return to work, e.g. a review through the University's Occupational Health Physician, please discuss with your lead Human Resources Officer/Manager.

Line Manager signature: Date

Employee signature: Date:

