

Absence Frequently Asked Question

Reporting

1. Q How is sickness absence reported?

A Individuals must phone their manager (or appointed deputy) no later than half an hour after their normal start of work time during the morning of their first day absent.

2. Q What if someone is too unwell to contact their manager personally?

A They will need to ask someone else to phone on their behalf.

3. Q How many days can someone be off work due to sickness before being required to provide a fit note?

A Individuals can self-certify for the first 7 days, after this they will need a fit note from their GP.

4. Q Where do Fit Notes have to be sent?

A Fit notes should be sent to the line manager, who will then, either directly or via a nominated individual, enter the details of the absence episode into the iTrent system

5. Q If someone is unwell during the working day and need to leave work, do they have to tell anyone?

A Yes, they will need to inform their line manager (or appointed deputy) that they are unwell and need to leave.

6. Q If there's a gap between fit notes, is any missing days covered?

A No, individuals would need to go back to their GP to request a fit note to cover any missing days.

7. Q Do individuals have to return to work when their fit note stating 'Not fit for work' has expired?

A Yes, unless they continue to be unwell and therefore would be required to get another fit note from their GP.

8. Q Do individuals need to tell their manager why they are absent?

A Yes, their manager will need to know the nature of their illness, when they will contact them again with an update, when they envisage returning to work. A manager needs this information to understand how an absence may impact on an individual's work

9. Q Is a manager allowed to contact individuals while they are away from work due to sickness?

A Yes, a manager will discuss with and agree how often they'll both keep in touch so that individuals can update them on their absence, progress and possible return to work.

10. Q What happens if Individuals do not contact their manager or fail to submit regular fit notes?

A They may be classed as absent without authorisation and won't receive pay for their absence. If they fail to submit regular fit notes their Occupational Sick Pay and Statutory Sick Pay may be stopped.

Return to work

11. Q What should be done when an individual is ready to return to work?

A They will need to make their Manager aware in advance of when they intend to return to work and of any ongoing problems should these impact upon them in the workplace. When they do return to work, the iTrent system should be updated by the staff member with the relevant details (via ESS, Employee Self-service). When this has taken place, the manager will receive an e-mail to notify them of the need to complete the return to work discussion.

12. Q Will they be interviewed on their return to work?

A Yes, their manager will want to have a return to work discussion with them to make sure they're fit enough to return to work, update them on work developments during their absence and see if any further support might be needed. The details of the discussion is held within the iTrent system, entered by the manager, and the staff member will receive an alert asking them to confirm that the information held is accurate.

13. Q Will notes be kept of the Return to Work discussion?

A Yes, this information will be held within iTrent, and be visible to the staff member and the Line Manager.

14. Q Can a manager send someone home if they return to work still feeling ill?

A Yes, if a manager is genuinely concerned about an individual or the possibility of the team becoming ill as a result of them returning not having fully recovered, then they may insist that they go home.

In cases where an individual may pose a health and safety risk at work to themselves or others it is compulsory for the manager to send them home and seek advice from Occupational Health.

15. Q What if individuals want to be at work but they are still having some difficulties because of their health problems?

A They should discuss this with their manager who may also seek advice from Occupational Health to see what could be done to support them to return to work.

Long Term Sickness

16. Q If absent from work due to long term sickness what should individuals do?

A They will need to submit their fit notes, continuously, to their manager and make every effort to keep their manager up to date on their prognosis and likely return to work. Managers should then forward the fit notes to HR promptly.

17. Q Can a manager contact individuals if they are on long term sickness absence?

A Yes, a manager will agree with them when and how they will both keep in touch. If an absence is likely to continue for a prolonged period of time a manager will also ask them to participate in absence review meetings.

18. Q Can they continue on long term absence indefinitely?

- A No, anyone on long term absence will be continuously reviewed and where a return to work has not been possible following absence review meetings or absence capability reviews the University can decide to end their contract of employment on the grounds of incapability due to ill health.

19. Q What are absence review meetings?

- A As part of the sickness absence process absence review meetings are required so a manager can discuss absences, try to understand an individual's health difficulties and explore with them possible support to facilitate their return to work at the earliest opportunity.

20. Q What are reasonable adjustments?

- A Details of reasonable adjustments can be found within the Reasonable Adjustment Guidance document available on the HR intranet site..

21. Q What if someone's health difficulties mean no reasonable adjustments are possible and they cannot return to work?

- A Support and adjustments will have been fully considered through absence reviews and where absences continue beyond 3 months, under the University's Capability Support Procedures. Where a return to work isn't possible options including Ill Health Retirement may be explored (where possible) or a decision may be made to end your employment on the ground of incapability due to ill health.

22. Q Do individuals accrue annual leave during long term absence?

- A Yes, they will accrue statutory annual leave only during their absence period, which is a maximum annual amount of 28 days (20 days + 8 bank holidays pro rata).

23. Q When might Ill Health retirement be considered?

- A Ill Health retirement is only applicable where you are in a pension scheme which offers this option, this would be considered at the point when individuals commence half pay or possibly earlier where a diagnosis or prognosis warrants a more immediate review.

24. Q Is it a University decision to approve an application for Ill Health retirement?

- A No. Ill health retirement is only offered by some Pension providers, as such any decision to grant Ill Health Retirement is made by a group of Trustees within the pension scheme in accordance with the rules of that scheme.