

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN**  
**POLICY ON SICKNESS ABSENCE**



## **1 POLICY STATEMENT**

The University places a high value on the health and wellbeing of all its staff. We are keen to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to maximise the welfare of staff, limit the consequences for staff and the University when absences due to illness occur and to support staff through such periods with the aim of securing their return to work and ensuring appropriate support after that return.

## **2 REPORTING OF SICKNESS ABSENCE**

Should you be prevented by illness from attending work, you should contact your line manager/Head of School as early as possible on the first day of your absence, ideally before your normal starting time or within 60 minutes of it. The reason for your absence should be given with an estimate of its probable duration, in order that alternative arrangements within the School/Section can be made where necessary. If you cannot give an indication of your estimated date of return to work initially you should contact your Line Manager every morning within the timeframe noted above to advise them of your continuing absence or to provide a probable return date when you have a clearer view of when this might be.

### **2.1 Absence of 1-7 days duration (including non-working days)**

For all periods of absence, including part days of absence, a University self-certification of sickness absence form must be completed and provided to your line-manager. This self-certificate is available at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/finance/staff/payroll>, from your School/Section Office or from the Payroll Office. It is your responsibility to obtain, complete and forward this form to your line manager on the day you return to work. The self-certificate should state clearly the reason for your absence.

### **2.2 Absences exceeding 7 days duration (including non-working days).**

All staff are required to submit a Medical Certificate from your General Practitioner/Consultant to your line manager. Should your illness continue, you are required to obtain a further medical certificate and contact your line manager as early as possible before the day you were originally due to return to work, to advise of your continuing absence. The procedure for reporting of absence must be followed in all events of sickness absence from the University. Failure to follow the procedure or submit medical certificates timeously may result in the cessation or suspension of your salary and sickness payments. Persistent failure may result in disciplinary action.

## **3 SICK PAY**

In order to ensure entitlement to University Sick Pay, you must comply with the procedures set out above for reporting of absence. During any 12 month period, you will be entitled, subject to the production of appropriate medical evidence, to sick leave in accordance with

the terms and conditions governing your employment taking account of any previous periods of sickness absence in the last 12 months, including self certification.

It is the responsibility of the University to pay Statutory Sick Pay in accordance with current employment legislation. Where appropriate, the Payroll Office will arrange for Sickness Benefit Claim Forms and medical certificates submitted by you to be forwarded to the local JobCentre Plus Office and make any necessary adjustments to salary to take into account entitlements to State benefits and University occupational sick pay.

#### **4 SICKNESS DURING HOLIDAYS**

In the event of a period of illness coinciding with a period of annual leave, for your absence to be recorded and processed as illness, you will be expected to provide a medical certificate indicating that you have been signed off due to ill health. You will be regarded as being on sick leave from the date provided on the certificate. This requirement will apply even if your absence is for less than 7 days.

Any days of annual leave covered by a medical certificate will be reinstated to your annual leave entitlement.

Should you be absent during the University closed period over the festive vacation, you will not receive an alternative day's holiday in lieu.

#### **5 ACCRUAL OF ANNUAL LEAVE DURING ABSENCE**

Where you have been absent through illness for a period exceeding three months in any 12 month period, you will accrue a proportionate amount of leave equal to the period of actual service which has been given during the leave year. Annual leave will cease to accrue when your entitlement to sick leave has expired, although in any annual leave year, a member of staff will be entitled to the statutory minimum annual leave on pro rata basis.

#### **6 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE**

##### **6.1 Role of the Service**

The Occupational Health Service for the University is provided by NHS Grampian Occupational Health Service. This service is contracted to provide independent advice and support to staff and their Line Managers on employee wellbeing and health matters. The service is staffed by professional occupational health physicians and advisers. All consultations are carried out in strict medical confidence and are normally instigated by a referral to the Occupational Health Service by your Line Manager through the Human Resources Office.

You are encouraged to discuss any health problems relating to your work in the first instance with your line manager, however you may wish to consult the Occupational Health Service for medical advice and assistance if you are concerned that you cannot perform at work to the best of your ability because of a health problem.

If you choose to self-refer to the service then details of discussions will not be supplied to the University or to any other person without your consent. However, where the circumstances are of a serious nature or require workplace adjustments, Occupational Health may be obliged to inform the University to ensure that we can meet our duty of care to you.

## **6.2 Referrals to Occupational Health**

The University reserves the right to refer you to the Occupational Health Service. Such referrals will be arranged through the Human Resources Office in consultation with your Line Manager as a result of concerns raised about your health and/or level of sickness absence.

An automatic referral to Occupational Health will occur if:

- You have been absent for a consecutive period of 21 calendar days or
- You have accrued 3 separate occurrences of sickness absence in a rolling 12 month period or
- You have an aggregate of 21 days sickness absence in a 12 month period.

When a referral is made to the Occupational Health Service, the Occupational Health Physician will be asked to provide the University with a report giving an assessment of your health and where appropriate their prognosis. This report will indicate:

- the likely date of return to work (if applicable);
- any reasonable adjustments that may be required to support you;
- the extent to which you will be fit to undertake the duties and responsibilities of your post in the near future or at all;
- whether a period of rehabilitation or a phased return to work is required;
- whether the University should consider re-deploying you into another post.
- whether the University should consider retirement on the grounds of ill-health

This report will then be used as the basis on which the Human Resources Office and your line-manager will facilitate your return to work (or retirement if appropriate).

Please note that the nature of your condition will not be disclosed to the University.

## **7 RETURN TO WORK**

If you have submitted a medical certificate from your GP, you must not return to work before the date indicated on your last medical certificate unless your GP has provided separate written consent.

On your return to work following any period of sickness absence your line manager will meet with you to advise you of any developments or changes in the workplace which have taken place during your absence. This informal meeting is also to provide you with an opportunity to discuss any specific support required by you following your return to work and whether there are health related issues which may be likely to impact on your work. It is recognised that where a prolonged period of absence has occurred, you may require additional support to aid your re-integration to the workplace. Ideally such needs would be identified prior to your date of return to work, however if your line manager has any on-

going concerns in this regard, the Human Resources Office can arrange a referral to Occupational Health, who can suggest an appropriate rehabilitation programme.

## **8 IMPACT OF ILL-HEALTH ON YOUR EMPLOYMENT**

### **8.1 Retirement on grounds of ill-health**

If it is the opinion of your GP and the Occupational Health physician that you will not be fit to return to undertake the duties of your post, and if the post cannot be modified, or re-deployment is neither possible or appropriate, then you may be eligible to request the release of your pension and lump sum benefits on the grounds of retirement due to ill-health. Retirement due to ill-health normally attracts an enhancement to your pension. In the first instance you should contact your Human Resources Officer to discuss your circumstances and the appropriate process.

### **8.2 Dismissal on grounds of ill-health**

If medical evidence has confirmed that you will not be fit to return to work in the foreseeable future and if ill health retirement is not an option, then the University may terminate your contract by reason of medical incapacity. In all such instances where a decision to dismiss is taken it will be made on the basis of reports from your GP, Occupational Health and line manager. Before such action is taken you will be advised of this matter and provided with the opportunity to meet with your line manager (or other appropriate University Officer) to discuss in some detail and you will have the right of appeal against a decision to terminate your employment.

## **9 SICKNESS ABSENCE DATA**

Currently all sickness absence is recorded by the Payroll Office. Management information on sickness absence will be produced on a regular basis with the purpose of:

- identifying patterns and causes for short or long term sickness absences.
- identifying organisational interventions to support staff;
- planning cover for staff absences; and
- identifying the cost of such absence.

## **10 FLOWCHART – SICKNESS ABSENCE PROCEDURE**

Exception to this will include staff who are required to work on these days. In such circumstances usual arrangements for reporting absence and payment of sick pay will apply.

