

Sickness Absence Policy

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I. Introduction

At Strathclyde, we understand that there'll inevitably be times when you can't come into work because of illness or injury. If this happens, we'll support you in your recovery and help you come back to work as soon as you're fit enough. We'll do this in a way that's fair and supportive, whilst also minimising the impact on the work of the University and on your colleagues.

This policy sets out our general approach to managing absence. For more detailed information on the steps we'll follow in cases of high levels of short-term absence or ongoing/ long-term sickness absence, please see our [Formal Sickness Absence Management Procedure](#).

Be sure to read the policy and procedures carefully. It's your responsibility to follow the policy and your entitlement to enhanced occupational sick pay is dependent on this.

Please note, if this policy refers to additional guidance, FAQs, online forms, or training, these are accessible to University colleagues on our [People Hub](#).

2. Who is Covered by this Policy?

This policy applies to all employees who are absent from work due to illness or injury.

Should you need time away from work for reasons other than sickness, we have a range of different policies to support you. Please see our [Leave, Time Off and Absence](#) (staff login required) pages on our People Hub for more information.

3. Guiding Principles

The health and safety of all staff is a top priority, and we believe a proactive approach focused on promoting wellbeing is key to minimising sickness absence.

Managers, with the support of Human Resources, are responsible for the effective management of absence and have a key role to play in creating a safe and healthy work environment including:

- Ensuring their team understand their roles and what's expected of them.
- Having clear channels of communication and creating opportunities to provide feedback, including regular check-ins with team members.

- Regularly assessing and reviewing occupational health and safety risks, including ensuring workloads are manageable.
- Creating an inclusive and supportive culture so that staff experiencing ill-health, personal or work-related difficulties can talk with them openly and with trust about their problems or concerns.
- Adopting a consistent approach to managing absence and striking a balance between providing support, recognising individual circumstances whilst facilitating the team member's return to work or a more regular pattern of attendance.

4. Reporting Absence

If you can't work because of sickness or injury, you need to let us know. You must call your manager (or other designated contact) before your usual start time or within the first hour.

You're expected to contact your manager by phone or video call (rather than by email or text) so that a meaningful conversation can take place.

If your absence is likely to last more than one day, you need to keep in regular contact with your manager (or other designated contact) at regular intervals throughout your absence.

If you're absent for more than seven calendar days, you'll need to get a fit note from your GP or other registered healthcare professional.

You can find more information about what's expected of you when you're sick in our [Absence Reporting Procedure](#).

5. Return-to-Work Discussions

When you return to work, your manager will meet with you to welcome you back, talk to you about how you're feeling and, if there are any adjustments suggested on your fit note, to discuss these in more detail. This meeting is also an opportunity to catch up on anything you've missed while you were away.

These discussions are informal and are often 'light touch'. However, it's important you tell your manager about any concerns you have, for example, if you think there may be underlying reasons for your absence, or if you were absent for a work-related reason. This is so that we can provide appropriate support.

You can find more information about return-to-work discussions in our [Return-to-Work Discussion Guide](#) (staff login required).

6. Absence Review Points

We use a 'review point' system for managing both short and long-term absence. This is to ensure we take a consistent and fair approach to managing sickness absence, and to ensure early supportive intervention. These review points are:

- 4 occasions of unplanned absence in a rolling 6-month period.
- 10 working days or more in a rolling 12-month period accrued over more than one absence (pro-rata for part time staff).
- 4 continuous weeks or more (long-term absence).
- Where the reason for absence is work-related.

If you've reached one or more of our absence review points, your manager will review with you your attendance record over the relevant period. If you're back at work, your manager will speak to you about it during your return-to-work discussion. But, if you're still off sick, they may have the discussion with you over the phone/ video call or arrange a meeting with you. In either case, this is still an informal meeting, aimed at understanding more about your absence(s), whether you have sought medical advice or other appropriate support, and to discuss what support you might need at work to help you maximise your attendance or return to work.

If your absence is ongoing, or if you're back at work but your absences are due to an underlying medical condition or may be work-related, your manager will normally discuss an Occupational Health (OH) referral with you.

In some cases, if appropriate, your manager will highlight the impact of your absences and inform you that your level of attendance needs to improve. They'll advise you that if you're level of sickness absence doesn't improve, our [Formal Sickness Absence Management Procedure](#) may be commenced. Your manager will keep a record of all decisions and actions taken. They'll also keep your absence levels under review and meet with you regularly to discuss progress and effectiveness.

Each situation is different, so managers should seek advice from [Human Resources](#) about the most appropriate course of action in each case.

If you reach a review point due to absences related to pregnancy or a disability, your manager will still arrange to meet with you. This is just so we can ensure we are fully supporting you and identifying and addressing any issues at work at an early stage.

You can find more information about absence review points in our [Absence Review Points Guide](#) (staff login required).

7. Occupational Health

We may request that you consent to an Occupational Health (OH) assessment. This is so we can get impartial medical advice about:

- how your condition impacts at work.
- your fitness for work/ likely duration of absence.
- recommendations on what, if any, reasonable adjustments we could make, and
- a return-to-work/ rehabilitation plan (if appropriate).

We'll normally ask you to attend an OH assessment if you have been absent for at least four continuous weeks or if you have frequent short-term absence. If you're absent due to a work-related illness or injury, we may make an OH referral straight away. In other cases, for example, where the prognosis and duration of your absence is known, or where you have been hospitalised, a referral may be delayed.

You don't have to agree to this request, but we want to support you to stay well at work or, if you're off sick, we want to support you during your absence and on your return to work. Having information about how your medical condition impacts at work, and what support you might need, can ensure we do this effectively. If you decide not to consent to an OH assessment, we'll manage your case based on the limited information we have available to us.

You can find more information about the OH referral process in our [Occupational Health Guide](#) (staff login required).

8. Formal Sickness Absence Management Procedure

We understand that everyone gets unwell from time-to-time, and we're committed to supporting you when this happens, but we must also meet our obligations to our students, customers, and colleagues, delivering the level of service they expect from us. High levels of sickness absence impact on our service levels and the workload and wellbeing of colleagues. It also raises concerns about your own wellbeing.

So, if you're persistently absent from work, we'll take all reasonable steps to support you, but we also may need to commence a more structured approach to reviewing and managing your absence. More information about the steps we'll follow can be found in our [Formal Sickness Absence Management Procedure](#).

9. Sick Pay Benefits

If you need to take time off work due to illness or injury, you may be entitled to occupational sick pay (OSP). How much you get is based on your length of service.

Period of continuous employment at start of absence from work	Full Pay *	Half Pay **
Less than 1 year	1 month (22 days)	1 month (22 days)
1 year but less than 2 years	2 months (43 days)	2 months (43 days)
2 years but less than 3 years	4 months (87 days)	4 months (87 days)
3 years but less than 5 years	5 months (108 days)	5 months (108 days)
5 years or more	6 months (130 days)	6 months (130 days)

* Including any entitlement to SSP. Pro-rata for part-time staff.

**** In addition to any entitlement to SSP, providing total payments do not exceed full contractual pay. Pro-rata for part-time staff**

Depending on your staff category, your OSP entitlements may vary from the table above, so always refer to your [terms and conditions of employment](#). Where there are any differences between the entitlements in this policy and the entitlements in your terms and conditions, the entitlements in your terms and conditions will apply.

To be entitled to OSP you must be an employee of the University and you must comply with the terms of this policy. Specifically, you must:

- Follow our Absence Reporting procedures, including maintaining regular contact with your manager throughout your absence, and providing fit notes from your GP/ approved medical practitioner (where required).
- Engage with our Formal Sickness Absence Management procedure, including attending meetings to discuss your absence and attending OH appointments.
- Not take part in sports, hobbies, or other avoidable activities that could worsen your illness/ injury or delay your recovery. This doesn't include specific activities recommended by your GP or other medical adviser.
- Not undertake any other employment, whether paid or unpaid, unless we have previously approved this.
- Comply with the terms and conditions of your employment during periods of sickness absence.

If you don't follow these terms, we may withhold your OSP. We may also investigate matters under our Disciplinary procedure if we suspect that this policy is being abused (for example, if we have a reasonable belief that you're working elsewhere or that you are not ill or injured).

You may also be eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP). This is a [fixed amount](#) set by the Government, normally payable for up to 28 weeks. If you qualify for SSP, we'll include this in any full pay you receive from us, and we'll pay it in addition to any half pay.

Your OSP entitlement is paid at your normal contractual pay rate and is calculated on a rolling 12-month period. Total payments during periods of sickness cannot exceed full contractual pay. You can find more information about how we calculate your sick pay in our [FAQs](#) (staff login required).

9.1. Compensation Claims for Absence Due to Third-Party Claims

If your absence is caused by an accident or act of negligence by someone else (a third party), you must let us know. If you pursue compensation from the third party, you should include loss of earnings in your claim.

Any sick pay paid to you during your absence will be subject to reimbursement if your claim is successful. If you repay the full amount, your absence won't be included when calculating any future entitlement to sick pay.

You must inform your manager and the [Payroll Team](#) when you file a claim and upon receipt of any compensation for loss of earnings. Failure to disclose such compensation, may result in disciplinary action.

10. Sickness and Annual Leave

10.1. Sickness During Annual Leave or on a Public Holiday

So long as you follow our Absence Reporting procedure, if you become ill or injured whilst on annual leave or during a public holiday, the time will be recorded as sick leave and you can take the annual leave or public holiday later, subject to normal manager approval.

10.2. Accrual of Annual Leave During Long Term Sickness Absence

During sickness absence your annual leave will continue to accrue (build-up) as normal, except in cases where your absence extends beyond three continuous months. After this point, your holiday entitlement will begin to accrue at the statutory rate for the **remainder of your absence**.

Statutory holiday entitlement, under Working Time Regulations, is currently 28 days per year inclusive of public holidays. This will be pro-rated for part time staff.

10.3. Taking Holidays During Long Term Sickness Absence

If you want to go away on holiday during a period of sickness absence, this should be based on medical advice, and you should discuss this with your manager in advance of travel. Providing you continue to submit fit notes, follow keeping in touch arrangements, and are available to attend any meetings or OH appointments as requested, time away from home will continue to be recorded as sickness absence.

If you wish, you can opt to use your annual leave entitlement during your sickness absence. Requests should be raised with your manager.

10.4. Holiday Carry Over During Long Term Sickness Absence

You should make every effort to use your annual leave within the leave year. But, if you're unable to do this due to ongoing sickness absence, you can carry over the remaining balance of your statutory holiday entitlement to the following leave year (in other words, 28 days less any annual leave/ public holidays taken before or during your absence, pro-rated for part time staff). You must then use this carried over leave within 18 months, subject to normal manager approval.

If you become fit to return to work before the end of the leave year, normal carry over rules apply. In other words, we'll expect you to take the holidays you accrued (built up) during your sick leave on your return to work and before the holiday year expires. If you choose not to do this, carry over will be curtailed to 5 days (pro-rata for part time staff) as per our [Annual Leave and Public Holiday Policy](#) and must be used by 31st December of that leave year.

In cases where your employment is terminated and you have not returned from sick leave, you will receive payment in lieu of statutory leave not taken from the previous leave year. You'll also receive payment for any holidays accrued in the current leave year.

11. Confidentiality and Disclosure

Confidentiality

If you're off sick, we want to reassure you we'll keep the reason for this as confidential as possible. Information about your health is classed as 'sensitive personal data' and it will always be processed in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), and all other applicable data protection legislation. This means, we'll never disclose it to anyone who doesn't have a legitimate need to know it to carry out their job function or responsibilities.

We'll ensure that anyone who handles your sensitive medical data does so in accordance with our [Data Protection](#) policy, and our [Staff Privacy Notice](#).

Disclosure

We want to assure you that, at Strathclyde, we want you to bring your whole self to work and we aim to offer a supportive environment where you feel safe to disclose any medical conditions or disability you might have. By sharing this information with us, we can ensure the most effective support is put in place for you.

If you have any questions or concerns about disclosing a disability or medical condition, you can talk to [Occupational Health](#) (staff login required), or the [Staff Disability Adviser](#) (staff login required) for advice.

12. Further Information and Support

If you have any queries about this policy, please talk to your manager or contact [Human Resources](#). Both staff and managers can also find more detailed information, guidance, and support on our [Sickness Absence](#) (staff login required) pages on our People Hub.

We also run a variety of wellbeing events and promotions throughout the year and offer a range of tools and resources all aimed at supporting you to take a proactive approach towards enhancing your own health and wellbeing. For more information, please see our [Wellbeing Hub](#).

For staff who identify with a protected group, or who have specific interests, we run several peer support staff networks, including our Neurodiverse and Disability Staff Network, our StrathPride Staff Network, and our Carers' Network. For anyone who is trans, non-binary or gender diverse,

we also have our [Ask Alex](#) service. For more information on our staff networks, please go to [Our Strathclyde Community](#) (staff login required).

And remember, our free and independent Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider, can also offer confidential support. Visit our [Wellbeing Hub](#) for more information.

13. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed by Human Resources on a regular basis. To see when the next review is due, please refer to our [Policy Review Schedule](#) (staff login required) on our People Hub.