



MANCHESTER LEARNING ACADEMY

SICKNESS & ABSENCE POLICY

REVIEW DATES:

15/01/2014
15/01/2015

Manchester Learning Academy

Sickness and Absence Policy

Statement and scope of Policy:

The purpose of this policy to make explicit the college commitment to the fair, equal and consistent treatment of staff, in regards to sickness absence.

- 1.1 This policy relates to all categories of staff and establishes guidelines for director in relation to sickness absence.
- 1.2 It sets out procedures for reporting and recording sickness absence. Accurate sickness absence records are vital to enable the college to fulfil its statutory obligations by identifying patterns of sickness and work related health problems.
- 1.3 This policy provides director with a flexible framework which promotes good employment practice.
- 1.4 It formalise the role of the absence recorder and outlines their roles and responsibilities for recording and maintaining absence information.
- 1.5 It seeks to clarify the responsibility of Directors for setting up appropriate systems to ensure the Absence Recorder is recording and monitoring absences effectively.

Aims of Policy

2.1 The College aims to provide a safe and healthy work environment for its employees, with a high standard of attendance crucial to delivering services to students. Staff who are ill will be treated sympathetically and every effort will be made to assist recovery and safeguard employment. It is also recognised, however, that loss of working days through unnecessary sickness absence can be a significant cost to the college in terms of work not completed or the cost of arranging absence cover, as well as the additional pressure that this places on colleagues.

2.2 The broad aims of this policy are:

- To provide a supportive environment for those members of staff affected by ill-health
- To ensure that sickness absence is managed responsibly, consistently and fairly, giving staff confidence in the college's approach
- To encourage and develop a positive culture towards attendance at work with the consequent benefit of reduced rates of absence due to sickness.

Principles

- a) Record Keeping Clear, comprehensive and accurate records must be maintained for all absences, including starting and finishing dates.

- b) **Standards** During inductions all new staff should be aware of the college's procedure for reporting absences, any local requirements and their responsibilities to comply with both.
- c) **Communication** From the outset of any episode of sickness absence, Directors should ensure that the individual establishes regular contact with the college in accordance with reporting requirements.
- d) **Consistency and Fairness** Proactive management of poor attendance will only be sustainable if it is underpinned by the application of consistent standards within the college.
- e) **Responsibility** The management of sickness absence is the joint responsibility of the Head of the College and the individual member of staff.
- f) **Confidentiality** Documentation relating to applicants will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and in accordance to the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Applicants will have the right to feedback and to access any documentation held on them in accordance with the DPA.
- g) **Equal Opportunities** This policy will be applied according to the principles of equal opportunities and managers are expected to ensure that no direct or indirect discrimination occurs.

Responsibilities

Every director of the college is responsible for adhering to the college's Sickness Absence Policy and will be expected to apply its principles in day-to-day work and activities.

Staff Developments

The college recognises the need to provide appropriate support to enable its staff to act in accordance with the Policy. This includes:

- providing information on relevant legislation and the university and the College's Policies and guidance on good practice.
- ensuring that, in addition to general information, specific guidance is provided to those responsible for carrying out particular functions effectively e.g. inputting absence data

Members of staff who are likely to be involved in implementing this policy will be required to attend the appropriate staff development events provided by the college.

Monitoring and Review

The college will monitor the operation of this policy in order to:

- measure the effectiveness of this policy
- comply with the College's legal obligations
- highlight practical issues and seek solution

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Breach of the Policy

The college will take seriously any instance of non-adherence to the Data Protection legislation and the college's policy by its staff.

Guidance on Good Practice for Dealing with Sickness Absence

Absence reporting and recording

This policy introduces a common reporting procedure for all staff, across all grades and groups including academic and non-academic, fixed term and visiting appointments, part-time and full-time, permanent and temporary.

It is vitally important that all managers and individuals recognise that any individual scheduled to work from home or at locations other than the college premises (which includes academic and research staff employed on non-teaching commitments) on a certain day, or due to attend at external training course or similar commitment, must also follow the procedures.

Reporting and recording procedures

- 1- Staff should be made aware, by their management, of the notification procedure for sickness absence during their departmental induction, and of the fact that their attendance levels are monitored.
- 2- Where a member of staff becomes ill whilst at work, and feels too unwell to continue working, his/her manager should give permission to individual to leave work and where appropriate, seek medical advice.
- 3- A member of staff who is sick and cannot attend work should normally contact his/her manager as early as possible and no later than 30 minutes after the time when he/she is expected to start work.
- 4- The member of staff should outline the nature of their illness. They should also state the anticipated length of absence, contact details if necessary and details of any outstanding or urgent work that needs to be dealt with during the absence.
- 5- If the absence is likely to exceed 7 consecutive calendar days the employee must obtain a medical certificate from their GP covering the period of absence and outlining that the was unfit to attend work.
- 6- If the absence continues, further medical certificates must be obtained to cover the whole period.
- 7- In cases of suspected abuse or where there is concerned about the level of type of absence, an individual may be required to provide a medical certificate for each absence regardless of duration.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence that has not been notified according to the above procedures should be treated as unauthorised absence, unless a reason is subsequently given which the director considers to be acceptable.

Informal Return to Work Interview

This policy introduces a common system of mandatory return to work interviews, conducted by the director and recorded on a "Return to Work Interview Form". The form should be signed by the director and the individual covers absences from one to seven days and also replaces the current self certification procedures.

Informal return-to-work interviews are essential to monitoring absence accurately and to reinforce the message that organisations care about their employees and sickness absence.

Monitoring Absence

Accurate recording of sickness absence is essential in order to develop a fair and consistent approach to attendance. In determining whether individual levels of sickness are unacceptably high as well as using triggers points, sickness absence in the department, and throughout the college, will be taken into account.

Reported short term absence

The absence of a member of staff due to sickness for six periods of absence in a rolling 12 month period or a total of 12 or more calendar days within the same period, will normally triggers a formal Sickness Absence Review meeting between the director and the individual. This will, of course, depend on the reason for the absence as some types of sickness will need no longer period of recuperation.

A member of staff who fails to comply with notification or certification procedures may be subject to further action, which could include use of the College Disciplinary procedures.

Prolonged sickness absence

In such cases, department should maintain with the member of the staff in order to remain updated about the likely duration of the sickness absence. The director should deal with cases of long-term sickness absence of 4 weeks or more. The member of staff has a responsibility to update his/her director regularly on his/her likely date of return to work.

Return to work plan

Following more serious long-term illness an individual recovery programmes can be planned, tailored for an appropriate period, bearing in mind that individuals may recover at different rates. Where appropriate an assessment of the employee's workplace may also be conducted.

Working in conjunction with the employee and his or her director, a plan should be drawn up, which is designed to facilitate the employee's return to an appropriate level of fitness.

The plan may include some or all of the following elements:

- Appropriate working hours to take account of specific circumstances
- Avoidance/restriction of certain tasks
- Temporary transfer to a different job/role
- Reasonable adjustments to the workplace
- Time away from work to attend medical appointments, physiotherapies or counselling sessions

Sickness during annual leave

Occasionally members of staff may become ill when on annual leave and wish to have their period of leave taken as sick leave. This is possible as long as the member of staff can provide a doctor's certificate confirming that they would not have been fit enough to carry out their usual duties at that time.

Holiday during periods of long term sickness

If a member of staff takes a holiday during a period of sickness absence, this will be recorded as sick leave as long as the employee provides a letter from their doctor confirming that they are still unable to work, and confirming that the holiday will be beneficial to their recovery. Under the Working Time Regulations 1998 employees are entitled to accrue and take paid annual leave during periods of sickness absence.

An employee on long term sick is, therefore, entitled to make a request on the normal way for their statutory holiday and be paid for it in full, even if they have exhausted the college sick pay provisions. This holiday must be taken in any particular leave year or lost.

Doctor, dentist and hospital appointments

These should, wherever possible, take place outside normal working hours. If this is not possible, the member of staff should try to make an appointment at the start or end of the working day. Staff should be given reasonable time off to attend hospital appointments.

Alternatives to sickness

The college recognises that an individual's personal or domestic situation may require understanding and consideration by the director. In such circumstances, individuals should discuss their situation as openly as possible with the director who is encouraged to support the individual by considering the use of special leave where appropriate.

The use of sick leave by an individual to meet a personal or domestic need unrelated to sickness is inappropriate and may constitute a disciplinary offence.

Keeping in touch/home visits

In cases of long-term absences, either the director or a nominee (who should be a senior member of staff) should contact the member of staff periodically and the member of staff should be asked to maintain regular contact. The director should also consider appropriate ways in which the staff member can keep in touch with the developments in their department and the college.

In appropriate circumstances, e.g. if a member of staff's illness lasts a considerable length of time, or if the person has no-one to assist him or her at home, the director may ask to visit the member of staff at home, depending on the individual circumstances.

A prior appointment should be made with the member of staff. The visit should be conducted with sensitivity and without putting pressure on the member of staff.

Third party claims

Contracts of employment may provide that if an employee is absent from work because of sickness or injury for which a third party may be liable, the employee should advise the director of the college forthwith and shall not be entitled to a sickness allowance under this scheme. The college shall, however, advance to the employee a sum not exceeding the sickness allowance.

Accidents, Injuries and industrial Diseases

If a member of staff believes that his/her condition may be related to an activity or incident at work, he/she should inform the Director. In the case of an accident an Accident Report Form should be completed and forwarded to the director who will deal with this for assessment and guidance.