

**A Guide to Managing Absence**

**1.0 Principle**

Illness is a misfortune and not misconduct and colleagues who are ill are entitled to sympathetic consideration. As such it is important that a distinction is made between absences on grounds of illness or injury and absence for reasons which may call for disciplinary action (for example, breach of sick pay regulations or absence without leave) and which should be dealt with via the disciplinary procedure.

**2.0 Procedure for Persistent Short-term Absences**

Absences should be investigated promptly by the line manager or immediate supervisor and the employee asked to give an explanation.

Where frequent short-term absences occur (whether Certified or not) a medical opinion should be obtained to establish whether or not there is an underlying medical reason for the absence.

Where no medical reason exists the matter should be dealt with via the Disciplinary Procedure or the Employee Assistance Programme, as appropriate.

Where there is no underlying medical reason the employee should be advised of the improvement which is required and warned of the likely consequences if their attendance does not improve.

If over a period of time there is no improvement, the employee’s age, length of service, performance, the likelihood of a change in attendance and the availability of suitable alternative work should all be taken into account in deciding the appropriate action.

It is essential that persistent absence is dealt with promptly and consistently to establish that absence is regarded as a serious matter that may result in the termination of employment.

**3.0 Procedure for Long-Term Absence**

The employee should be contacted periodically and, in turn, should maintain regular contact with the employer.

The employee should be asked when he/she is likely to be able to return to work, following consultation with his/her Doctor.

If there is no prospect of an early return to work, or if this is not clear, the employee should be referred to the University’s occupational health doctor.

Based on the medical evidence i.e. the nature of the illness and whether or not a return to work is likely within a reasonable time scale, a decision should be taken to either advise the employee that termination of employment is likely, if he/she cannot return to work or that a decision is to be deferred for a period of time.

In Some cases it may be that retirement from post on the grounds of ill health may be considered by the University.

Alternative work should be considered where it may be suitable and available and where the medical advice is that this would be helpful.

If the employee refuses to attend for a medical examination by the University’s nominated Doctor he/she should be advised that a decision will be taken in the light of the information available.

The employee may if he/she so chooses submit his/her own medical report. In the circumstances where such a report is contrary to the medical evidence available from the University’s nominated Doctor, an independent Doctor will be consulted.

Before any final decision is made the employee will be given the opportunity of presenting his/her case to the University and will have the right of representation at this meeting.

**4.0 Dismissal and Appeal**

Where dismissal occurs, whether in the case of short-term frequent absence or long term absence, the employee should be given the contractual notice and informed that she/he has the right of appeal.

The appeal will be heard by a Tribunal constituted as provided for in the appeals procedure.