

Sickness Absence Policy

WHC reserves the right to amend this policy at its discretion. The most up-to-date version can be downloaded from our website.



University of the
Highlands and Islands
West Highland College

Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean
Colaiste na Gàidhealtachd an Iar

Sickness Absence Policy

ELT manager	Lydia Rohmer, Principal and Chief Executive
Responsible officer	Lyn Goodenough, HR Manager
Date first approved by BoM	28 th June 2017
First Review Date	June 2020
Date review approved by BoM	N/A
Next Review Date	
Equality impact assessment	17 th July 2017
Further information (where relevant)	

Reviewer	Date	Review Action/Impact	BoM
	June 2017	Replaces Managing Absence policy	

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1. Purpose

West Highland College UHI (the College) is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of staff and promoting attendance at work. The Policy aims to maximize attendance while recognising that there are occasions when staff may not be able to attend work due to their ill health.

The purpose of this policy and associated procedures and guidance is to provide a clear framework for reporting and recording sickness absence and outlines the fair and consistent management of short and long-term sickness absence across the College. It also ensures that staff have the support they need from their managers, as well as access to support services.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Sickness Absence Guidance document that accompanies this policy.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all West Highland College staff. The principles of this policy will apply to staff on probation, however, absence concerns will be raised and considered as part of the probation process and not the formal Attendance Review Meeting process.

3. Policy Aims

The aims of the policy are to:

- Provide staff and managers with a standard process and consistent approach for managing, recording and reporting sickness absence;
- Promote a positive culture of attendance;
- Minimise sickness absence levels and help facilitate return to work as soon as possible;
- Offer support and assistance to staff experiencing ill-health;
- Ensure the College acts in a fair, reasonable and consistent manner when dealing with sickness absence issues; and
- Establish the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, including staff, managers, Human Resources and Occupational Health in relation to sickness absence.

Staff who are unable to attend work due to ill-health are required to notify their manager of their absence by following the sickness absence reporting procedure, as set out in the Sickness Absence Procedure.

Managers should be supportive of staff when managing sickness absence and ensure that it is addressed in a caring and sensitive manner and with a fair and consistent approach, balancing the needs of individual staff with those of the College.

The College will adopt a case-by-case approach when working with staff who are absent from work due to ill-health, and, where advised, modify the approach to the specific health circumstances of each individual.

Guidance and advice should be sought from the HR Department for any specific concerns regarding the application of the policy. Further advice on managing sickness absence is provided in the Sickness Absence Guidance document.

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The policy seeks to ensure that sickness absence matters are dealt with sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of the individuals concerned.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of staff, managers, Human Resources and Occupational Health are explained below:

The Manager:

- Ensures staff are aware of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure, and what is expected of them via the induction process and day-to-day management.
- Monitors and records sickness absence levels in a timely manner.
- Conducts and records return to work discussions following a period of absence due to sickness and ensures that staff provide the appropriate documentation.
- Addresses sickness absence concerns when they become known and seeks to resolve these at the earliest opportunity in a prompt, confidential and sensitive manner and ensuring consistency and fairness.
- Leads and directs informal discussions and formal Stage 1 and 2 Absence Review Meetings.
- Ensures that any reasonable adjustments that are recommended by either the doctor or Occupational Health are given due consideration and implemented (where appropriate) in a timely manner.
- Liaises with the HR Department to refer staff to Occupational Health as appropriate.
- Ensures appropriate levels of communication with absent staff are mutually agreed and maintained.
- Seeks guidance from the HR Department for cases other than routine sickness absence management.
- Ensures that in dealing with sickness absence cases compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (which incorporates the key provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, as amended in 2005) and the College's associated policies such as the Equality & Diversity Policy are adhered to.
- Ensures all incidents/accidents at work are accurately recorded in line with the accident reporting procedures.

Staff:

- Looks after their own health and minimising their absence from work.
- Keeps their manager informed about health issues that might affect their ability to work and/or attendance.
- Follows the sickness reporting procedures by informing their manager when they are unable to attend work due to sickness or if they are taken ill or are injured while at work.
- Provides relevant and timely self-certification and/or Statement of Fitness for Work ('Fit Note').
- Co-operates with their manager during the absence management procedures and answers concerns raised.
- Attends Occupational Health or other appropriate medical specialist if reasonably requested to do so.
- Maintains regular contact with their manager throughout any period of sickness absence, especially if the absence is long-term.
- Makes every effort to attend medical and/or dental appointments outside their normal working hours if possible. Where this is not possible, makes every effort for such appointments to be scheduled for the beginning/end of their working day or lunch time.

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- Understands that not complying with the relevant statutory rules relating to sickness absence may affect eligibility for sick pay and that, following investigation and dependant on circumstances, disciplinary procedures may be instigated.
- Attends return to work discussions and formal Absence Review Meetings as appropriate.
- Works with their manager to support the implementation of reasonable adjustments to working arrangements practices and procedures to deal with the challenges created by disability, ill-health or injury.

Human Resources:

- Provides sickness absence reports to managers.
- Provides advice and guidance on health and sickness matters to managers and staff.
- Advises and supports managers on all aspects of the operation of the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure, helping to maintain consistency in its application.
- Attends formal meetings and provides procedural advice.
- Works with Occupational Health and other support services on case management.
- Provides information and support to managers and staff where an individual is or becomes disabled.

Occupational Health:

- Provides advice and guidance on health and sickness matters to managers, staff and HR.
- Following a management referral, meets with the staff member and provides a confidential assessment of their fitness for work and, with their consent, prepares a written report to the manager/HR Department.
- Provides advice and recommendations on steps and/or adjustments that might assist rehabilitating a staff member back to work following a period of sickness absence.
- Provides advice on whether a staff member's health problems may be related to work or the working environment and any actions that may prevent further problems.
- Provides advice in relation to any long-term concerns about a staff member's fitness to work, which may need further action to be considered such as permanent readjustments to the role, redeployment support or ill-health retirement.
- With the staff member's consent and where indicated, obtains additional information from the staff member's doctor, medical consultant or other treating specialist.
- Provides a confidential support service to staff.

5. Relevant Legislation

Equality Act 2010 (incorporating the Disability Discrimination Act 1995)
Data Protection Act 1998

6. Related Policies

Equality and Diversity Policy
Stress Management Policy

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if necessary.