

Sickness Absence



Your Guide

Your Responsibility



It is a contractual requirement to **notify** the University of your sickness absence on the first day this occurs. You must also **certify** your sickness absence with either a Self Certificate (statement of sickness for employees), as soon as you return to work, or a Doctors Fit Note (for any absence over 7 calendar days). If you do not do this, your absence will be classed as unauthorised and you will not be paid for the period of absence. Self Certification Forms and Doctors Fit Notes should be given to your School/Dept Absence Administrator.



If you are unable to attend work due to ill-health, you should notify your Line Manager, or the designated person in your School/Department, as soon as possible on the first working day of your absence **by telephone**, providing the reason for absence, start date of the illness, expected return date and discuss any relevant work commitments. If circumstances are such that you are unable to telephone, a relative or friend may call on your behalf.

During your period of Sickness Absence

- maintain regular contact with the University
- follow medical/occupational health advice
- submit Fit Notes promptly, as soon as received
- allow contact from the University to support your return to work or enable cover to be planned
- do not engage in any other paid employment or take part in any activity that may aggravate your condition.

RETURNING TO WORK

When fit to return to work, you should:

- ensure your absence records are updated by informing the school/department absence administrator
- if issued with a Doctor's Fit Note advising restricted duties, advise your Line Manager who will contact Occupational Health for advice
- meet with your Line Manager on your first day back at work for a **return to work discussion** including an update on activity missed, discuss any issues that may have contributed to your illness and any Occupational Health advice.

Phased Return to Work

If Occupational Health advice is that you should have a phased return, the details will be agreed with your Line Manager and this will normally be put in place, for a maximum 4 week period for reduced days/hours, or up to two months for restricted duties.

You will remain on your full salary during this 4 week period, provided you have not had a previous phased return in the past 12 months (rolling period). If you have already had a phased return your sick pay entitlement will be used to cover the non-working periods.

If you require ongoing treatment (e.g. physio) to assist recovery, you will be allowed reasonable time off work (normally up to ½ day per week) under Special Leave. You will not be asked to undertake any additional duties, or work overtime, during your rehabilitation period.

UNIVERSITY TRIGGER POINTS

Frequent sickness absence is considered as:

- **3** separate episodes in any **6** month period
- **10** or more days in a rolling **6** month period
- **4** separate episodes in any **12** month period

Should you reach a trigger point your line manager will meet with you informally. This is an opportunity to check that the information is correct and for you to let your manager know if there are any mitigating circumstances to be aware of. You may be referred to Occupational Health for advice following the discussion.

After the meeting should absence triggers be reached you may be asked to attend a formal sickness absence review meetings with your Manager to establish the reasons for the absences and to allow you to re-establish a normal working pattern, further details of the formal process are available in the [Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure](#). At any formal meeting you can bring a trade union representative or work colleague along with you for support.

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

The usual absence trigger points may not be appropriate in the following situations:

- A reported accident at work which results in an absence from injury
- A planned hospital intervention to address the underlying cause of previous absences or to prevent future sickness absences. This would include the anticipated recovery procedure from such an intervention.
- Emergency admission to hospital
- Illness arising from pregnancy
- Illnesses/injuries suffered as a result of being the victim of a crime (evidenced by a police crime number)
- Connected periods of absence due to the same or a related illness no more than 2 working days after the first absence
- Where Occupational Health have indicated that further absence should be expected before an improvement can be achieved, such as planned surgery
- Domestic Abuse
- Illness relating to a disability for which dual track monitoring is in place. (see guidance on '[Supporting employees with a disability or terminal illness](#)')

Revised trigger points may be used or in some situations particular absences will not be counted towards the University trigger points for sickness absence.

If you believe that you may have a disability or chronic condition where 'dual track' absence monitoring may be appropriate please speak to your line manager who can arrange an Occupational Health referral to confirm.

LONG TERM ABSENCE

For a continuous absence of **1 month or more**, you will be referred to Occupational Health and your Manager will then arrange to meet with you, together with an HR Representative. During the meeting we will try to establish:

- the likely duration of your absence
- what problems you may be experiencing
- any Occupational Health advice
- what support/assistance the University can offer
- an indication of when you may be able to return to work

Meetings will usually happen after 1, 3 and 6 months absence from work. However these timescales may be adjusted depending on the circumstances.

You are welcome to bring a trade union representative or work colleague along with you for support at meeting regarding long term absence from work.

If you are unable to return to work due to long term sickness a meeting will be arranged to review your attendance and any alternatives such as redeployment, further details of the formal process are available in the [Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure](#).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1. If I'm covered by a sick note does this mean the absence trigger points do not apply?** No, the absence trigger points are intended to monitor genuine absence this may be self or GP certified.
- 2. Can I report my absence by text?** No, absence should be reported via a phonecall in the first instance. Check which number to call with your manager.
- 3. Can my manager contact me whilst I'm off sick?** Yes, it is reasonable that your manager (or other agreed contact) will be in touch from the University. This contact is intended to be supportive; ensuring awareness of your current health and wellbeing.
- 4. My child is ill, can I take sick leave to care for them?** No, this would be dependent leave as covered by the special leave policy and not sickness absence.
- 5. What will happen if I've hit an absence trigger point?** The first stage would be an informal discussion between yourself and your line manager, during this you can discuss any mitigating factors, check that records are correct and consider if a referral to Occupational Health could be of benefit.
- 6. How many days absence will be recorded if I leave work due to sickness?** If you leave before half of your scheduled hours 1 working day will be recorded, if you leave on or after working half of your scheduled hours ½ a working day will be recorded.
- 7. If I'm off sick and I work part time (i.e. 3.5 hrs in a day) how will this be recorded?** This will be recorded as 1 working days absence.
- 8. I have a disability and may need more time off work than some other staff, how will the University support me?** We are committed to supporting all staff at the University, it may be appropriate to use 'dual track' in relation to your absence.
- 9. What happens if I'm sick while on annual leave?** If you have a fit note you will be able to use this holiday entitlement at another time.

ADVICE & SUPPORT

Key contacts:

HR Operations - hroperations@tees.ac.uk

Occupational Health - occupationalhealth@tees.ac.uk

Health & Safety - healthandsafety@tees.ac.uk

University Policies & Guidance:

Available on Unity / HR / Policies & Procedures

[Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure](#)

[Special Leave Policy](#)

[Sick Pay Scheme](#)

University Forms:

[Health Improvement Plan \(HIP\)](#)

[Reasonable Adjustments form](#)

[Statement of Sickness for Employees \(Self Certificate\)](#)

[Return to work record](#)

[Stress Risk Assessment Form](#)

