



ST. HUGH'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

## **SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

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# Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure

## Introduction

The College is committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of all employees. This policy aims to promote supportive and effective management of absence due to ill-health (commonly known as sickness absence) and that any support is considered as early as possible.

The Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure aims to maximise employee attendance while recognising that there are occasions when employees may be unable to attend work due to their own ill-health.

The purpose of this policy 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 employees have the support they need from their managers, as well as access to support services provided by the College.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Provide employees 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 employees' return to work;
- 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 employees, managers, Human Resources and Occupational Health in relation to sickness absence.

## Overview of Procedure

### Reporting Procedure

If an employee cannot attend work due to ill-health, they should notify their manager of their absence by telephone as soon as possible on the first day of absence and, normally, before the start of their normal working day. The following details should be provided:

- The nature of the illness or injury;
- The expected approximate length of absence from work;
- Contact details;
- Whether the absence may be due to an injury at work or otherwise perceived to be related to work; and
- Any outstanding or urgent work that requires attention

If an employee does not arrive at work and does not notify their manager of their absence, the manager will attempt to contact the employee, either by telephone or letter, to ensure their wellbeing. If an employee is unable to contact their manager personally, in accordance with the required sickness absence reporting procedure, they should make alternative arrangements e.g., ask a family member to call on their behalf.

If an employee fails to notify their manager (or a designated person within their department) and does not have a valid reason for not doing so, it may be treated as unauthorised absence and may be dealt with under the College's disciplinary procedure.

The manager and the employee should maintain reasonable contact whilst the employee is absent from work due to ill-health, taking into account the nature of the absence. Contact between the manager and the employee will usually be by telephone, in the first instance, with the ongoing method of communication then mutually agreed.

Communication should focus on the employee's health and wellbeing, and their return to work including any measures to facilitate a return. Consideration may also be given to any work that requires attention in their absence. If a manager is concerned about being unable to make contact with an employee, they should contact Human Resources for advice.

If an employee is taken ill whilst on annual leave, or a fixed-closure day which is deducted from the annual leave allowance set out in their contract, arrangements will apply under which, provided the employee satisfies the department by production of a self-certification form or doctor's certificate (Fit Note), they will be able to take the balance of their annual holiday (but excluding any allowance for sickness on days of public holiday or fixed closure days which are in addition to the annual leave allowance) at a later date after they return to work. This leave should normally be rearranged during the same holiday year, but, if this is not possible, the affected leave may be carried forward to the next year. The normal reporting requirements for sickness still apply when an employee is taken ill whilst on annual leave.

#### Submission of Self-Certification Form / Statement of Fitness for Work

Duration of sickness absence in calendar days	Documentation required from employee
Up to 7 calendar days	Self-certification form
8 calendar days or more	A Statement of Fitness for Work (or ' <a href="#">Fit Note</a> ') must be obtained from a doctor, nurse, occupational therapist, pharmacist or physiotherapist ("healthcare professional"). A fit note will advise that either an employee is unfit for work or that they may be fit for work subject to reasonable adjustments.

Employees who receive a fit note stating that they "may be fit for work" should inform their manager as soon as possible. When presented with a fit note that contains specific medical advice or recommendations, the manager should discuss this with the employee and advice sought from Occupational Health. This may take place at a return-to-work discussion, Absence Review Meeting, or other meeting as appropriate. If the suggested adjustments cannot be implemented, the employee will remain on sick leave and a date will be set to review the situation.

#### Recording Sickness Absence

All occurrences of sickness absence, including half days, should be recorded on Cintra self-service by the manager or delegated administrator in a timely manner. The record should include:

- The reason for the absence (as stated on the self-certification form or fit note); and
- The length of the absence, including any half-days.

If an employee works part-time and is sick for all of their normal working days that week, the whole week should be recorded as sick leave on Cintra.

The end date for a period of sickness absence should only be recorded on Cintra when the individual has returned to work.

Weekends, Public Holidays and rest days are included in a continuous period of sickness absence. Rest days for shift workers are treated in the same way as weekends.

### Occupational Sick Pay

The College's Sick Pay Scheme showing length of service requirements and entitlements to paid leave is as follows:

Service	Full Pay (*)	Half Pay (*)
First three months	2 weeks	2 weeks
Remaining nine months of first year	2 months	2 months
Second and third years	3 months	3 months
Fourth and fifth years	5 months	5 months
After fifth year	6 months	6 months

(\*) Inclusive of any College sick pay given in the 12 months preceding the start of the latest period of such leave.

If an employee is on sick leave, they are entitled to payment at the rate of full salary in the first instance (which will be inclusive of any payable Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)) for such period as the College may determine, noting the guidelines above, which should be adhered to at the minimum. The College has discretion to pay at the rate of part salary for a further period via approval from the Bursar and Head of Human Resources, which should not normally affect payment of SSP if an employee has remaining entitlement.

In cases of extended sick leave, it is possible that payment of full or half pay under the College's own sick pay scheme may be exhausted, but SSP continue to be due (primarily affecting employees on extended sick leave with less than 4 years' continuous service). Employees should be informed if this is about to happen.

The College will pay SSP to eligible employees who comply with the relevant statutory rules relating to sickness absence. Information on SSP eligibility can be found [here](#).

### Return to Work (RTW) Discussions

Return to work discussions (or 'interviews') offer the opportunity to discuss with the employee their sickness absence from work, and any issues and/or concerns related to it, including identifying any adjustments that may need to be made to their work and/or agreeing a phased return in the interests of their health and wellbeing. The discussion should be based on the information provided on the

Return-to-Work form or the Fit Note (statement of fitness for work). Any support needs or work adjustments that aid the RTW can also be addressed.

Return to work discussions should take place following any sickness absence period, but especially so where the employee has had three or more separate periods of absence within the last six months, has been absent for more than two weeks, or if the manager has any other concerns related to the absence. This can help identify problems early on, and allows for reasonable and practical changes to be identified and implemented, which can help prevent or minimise any future absence. Such discussions should not be time consuming and should remain informal. Managers must take a consistent and fair approach in all cases. Advice from Human Resources may be sought if the line manager has any concerns.

Where medical input is necessary (in order to reach a decision about a member of staff), a "management referral" of an individual can be made to the University Occupational Health Service so that a medical report can be obtained. This should be done by the head of department, or by a senior administrator, or member of Human Resources, acting on the head of department's behalf. Where an employee has a known existing medical condition, or may be undergoing a medical treatment/monitoring, careful consideration should be given in the approach to such cases and further advice sought from Occupational Health or Human Resources.

### Frequent Short-Term Absence

Frequent short-term absence refers to when an employee is frequently absent from work for short periods of time due to ill-health (i.e., three or more separate periods of absence within the last six months). This type of absence can be particularly difficult for departments and employees as they are usually without notice and it is difficult to plan for their impact. Whilst the College understands that employees may have some short-term sickness absence, it is essential that frequent short-term absence is dealt with promptly and consistently, with appropriate support.

Understanding the reasons for frequent short-term absence helps identify a resolution. Referral to Occupational Health may assist this. The cause must be correctly identified in order to put in place an appropriate course of action to remedy it. Managers should also be aware that frequent short-term absence might be caused or exacerbated by factors in the workplace. If a workplace issue is identified, appropriate steps should be taken to address the factor that is contributing to the problem wherever possible. Human Resources can provide advice where required.

Managers are advised to take positive steps to monitor and manage frequent short-term absences. If an employee frequently has short-term absences, it may be appropriate to hold a formal Absence Review Meeting.

### Long Term Sickness Absence

Continuous absence due to ill health lasting for four or more weeks is considered to be long-term and the employee concerned should be invited to attend an Absence Review Meeting. Employees may be absent on long-term sick leave for a variety of reasons (e.g., injury, operation, convalescence from illness, diagnosis of a long-term disability, terminal illness etc.) and any action taken will vary according to the circumstances of the particular case.

The College is committed to supporting and helping employees return to work from long-term sickness absence. As part of the Sickness Absence Review Process, the College may:

- Obtain medical advice and discussing this with the employee (e.g. early referral to Occupational Health);
- Make reasonable adjustments to the workplace (e.g. working practices and working hours);
- Consider redeployment support; and/or
- Agree a return to work programme, which may include a phased return to work.

Employees on long-term sick leave should agree with their manager how contact should be maintained on a regular basis, for example, by telephone, email or letter. The timing and nature of contact will be appropriate to the situation of the employee and their health condition. However, employees should expect to be contacted by their manager from time to time and it is generally expected that telephone or personal contact will be made at least every four weeks.

Where there is an indication that work related matters may have contributed to the absence, an early referral to Occupational Health will usually be made for advice on the employee's fitness for work and likely date of return. Occupational Health can offer support to the individual as well as the possibility of access to further support services to assist recovery and return to work.

Following a period of long-term sickness absence, a phased return to normal working hours is sometimes recommended. A phased return should normally be for a period of no more than four weeks and would be on full pay. Appropriate support should also be provided to the returning employee during this time to facilitate their return.

## Occupational Health

Where medical advice is sought, such as where there has been long-term absence or repeated short absences, a referral to Occupational Health for an assessment and advice about any ill-health concerns may be necessary. This will provide specific advice regarding the management of health conditions in relation to work and any support and/or reasonable adjustments that should be considered. The benefits of and reasons for an Occupational Health referral should be discussed with the employee by the manager prior to completing the management referral form. Occupational Health will advise on fitness to work and the impact of any health problem on the employee's ability to perform their job, including any reasonable adjustments or work modifications that should be considered.

Details of the health problem and the discussion between the Occupational Health Adviser and the employee will not be disclosed to the referring manager without the specific consent of the employee. However, employees are encouraged to share relevant information about their health with referring managers to enable them to consider appropriate support.

An Occupational Health referral will usually be appropriate where:

- There is an indication that there are factors in the workplace contributing to the sickness absence;
- Several absences are noted for the same cause on the attendance record;

- There is a continued concern regarding short-term sickness absence despite informal discussions;
- The employee requests a referral;
- The employee has a fit note stating that they are unfit for work but does not wish to wait until the expiry of the fit note before returning to work;
- There is a case of long-term sickness absence, including the management of return to work; and/or
- There are concerns that an employee's health may lead to sickness absence (i.e. preventative advice).

Following an Occupational Health assessment, the employee will have an opportunity to view the report before it is issued to the referring manager and comment on any factual inaccuracies. Once the employee has given their consent for the report to be released, Occupational Health will send a copy to the referring manager.

Where a report has been obtained from Occupational Health, a meeting should be held between the line manager and the employee to discuss the content of the report and any recommendations.

### Supporting staff with disabilities

Disability is defined under the Equality Act 2010 (The Act) as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative effect on an individual's ability to do normal daily activities.

The Act requires the College to make 'reasonable adjustments' where a provision, criterion, function, practice, and/or physical, environmental conditions of features in premises occupied by the College, places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage when compared with people who are not disabled.

For people with a disability or a long-term health condition, their sickness absence may have nothing to do with their disability. However, if their sickness absence is related to a disability, the College has a duty under The Act to make reasonable adjustments.

There is no automatic obligation for employees to disclose a disability or health condition to the College, although employees should inform their manager if they consider their disability and/or health condition affects their ability to undertake their work and/or poses a health and safety risk.

Where an employee chooses to disclose a disability, as defined under the Act, managers should consider and discuss the necessary support, adaptations and reasonable adjustments to the workplace or role or other aspects of working arrangements that will provide support at work and/or assist a return to work.

### Sickness Absence Review Process Conducting Informal Discussions

In the first instance it may be appropriate for the manager to have an informal discussion with the employee. This may arise, for example, where an employee's pattern of absence gives cause for concern or where matters discussed at a return-to-work discussion require further investigation.

Informal discussions should:

- Review the employee's sickness absence record;
- Highlight any patterns or concerns (for example, if an employee has repeated sickness absences on a Monday, Friday or following a period of authorised annual leave);
- Offer support and advice as required;
- Give the employee the opportunity to inform their manager of any health issues or any other factors which have contributed to their absence; and
- Consider any mitigating factors (for example, pregnancy or disability-related absences).

If appropriate, an attendance target over a specific period of time will be set. If the employee's absence levels reduce, the target is met and the desired improvement is made, no further action will be taken. However, if the employee fails to meet the agreed attendance target, it may be appropriate to hold a formal Absence Review Meeting.

If, during the informal or formal Sickness Absence Review Process, there appears to be an underlying health issue, the manager should offer appropriate support and a referral to Occupational Health, in consultation with the employee and Human Resources.

### The 3-stage Formal Process

The Sickness Absence Review Process has three formal stages, with provision for an appeal at each stage.

Timescales for each stage will depend on individual circumstances and some sickness absence may be dealt with over a longer or shorter period than others. The point at which a manager decides to move an employee to the next stage of the Sickness Absence Review Process will vary from case to case.

All meetings should be approached in a caring and supportive manner, demonstrating an understanding of what might be a difficult time for the employee.

The employee should receive at least five working days written notice of the formal Absence Review Meeting and be sent a copy of their sickness absence / attendance record, Occupational Health report (where appropriate) and any other relevant documents. The letter inviting the employee to the meeting will outline the purpose of the meeting, the date, time and location and the employee's right to be accompanied.

The employee may be accompanied to formal meetings by either a colleague or trade union representative. The employee must confirm their companion's identity to the manager conducting the meeting at least two days before it is due to take place.

Formal meetings will be held by the employee's manager or a more senior manager and may be attended by a representative from Human Resources. In the case of a Stage 3 Absence Review



Meeting, it will be conducted by the Head of Department (or alternative senior manager) and will be attended by a representative from Human Resources.

See Appendix 2 for further detail on conducting formal meetings.

### Formal Stage 1 Absence Review Meeting

A formal Stage 1 Absence Review Meeting may be held when an employee's absence due to sickness is of concern and informal action is no longer appropriate or has not succeeded in improving attendance to an acceptable level.

The purpose of a Stage 1 Absence Review Meeting will depend on the type of sickness absence being investigated but may include:

- Discussing the reasons for absence and giving the employee the opportunity to explain their absence and any mitigating circumstances;
- Where the employee is on long-term sickness absence, determining how long the absence is likely to last, taking into account any available medical evidence;
- Where the employee has been absent on a number of occasions, determining the likelihood of further absences;
- Considering whether medical advice is required, including a referral to Occupational Health if this has not already been arranged;
- Considering whether the employee has a disability that may necessitate reasonable adjustments being made in the application of the formal process;
- Considering what, if any, measures might improve the employee's health and/or attendance;
- Agreeing a way forward, any action that will be taken and a timescale for review and/or a further meeting under the Sickness Absence Review Process; and/or
- Consideration of the impact of the absence on the work area and service provision, and arrangements put in place as required.

Possible outcomes may include:

- Adjourning the meeting to obtain further medical evidence;
- A return to work programme, possibly with a phased return to work (where the employee has been absent for a long period);
- Where the employee has been absent on a number of occasions, issuing a First Improvement Notice setting out the required improvement in attendance. The employee should be advised that if the requisite improvement is not achieved this may result in further formal action, which may include attending a Stage 2 Absence Review Meeting; and/or
- No further action at this stage

A First Improvement Notice will establish the commencement of a formal absence monitoring period and will set out any required attendance levels, the implications for not meeting those levels, the review process during the monitoring period and the employee's right of appeal against the decision. Line managers must discuss individual cases with Human Resources prior to issuing a First Improvement Notice.

A copy of the First Improvement Notice will be retained on the employee's personnel file. The First Improvement Notice will remain active for a specified period (e.g., six months) after which time it will be disregarded.

The manager will monitor the employee's attendance during the review period. On completion of the review period, the manager will meet with the employee to inform them of the outcome that either:

- The employee has met any required attendance levels set and no further action will be taken;
- Progress has been made towards meeting the attendance levels set, but they have not been achieved fully (or other factors have been present e.g. leave) and the review period will be extended or other options considered; or
- The employee has not met the attendance levels set and the matter will be progressed to the second stage of the Absence Review Process.

If agreed attendance levels are exceeded prior to the end of the review period, the sickness review meeting may be brought forward accordingly.

### Formal Stage 2 Absence Review Meeting

A formal Stage 2 Absence Review Meeting may be held when an employee has been unable to return to work, a return-to-work programme has been unsuccessful or an employee's absence levels have continued to be in excess of those set out in the formal absence monitoring period and/or remain a concern.

The purpose of a Stage 2 Absence Review Meeting will depend on the type of sickness absence being investigated but may include:

- Discussing the reasons for and impact of the employee's on-going absence(s);
- Where the employee is on long-term sickness absence, discussing how long the absence is likely to last;
- Where the employee has been absent on a number of occasions, discussing the likelihood of further absences;
- If it has not been obtained, considering whether medical advice is required. If it has been obtained, considering the advice that has been given and whether further advice is required;
- Considering the employee's ability to return to/remain in their job in view both of their capabilities and the College's business needs and any adjustments that can reasonably be made to the job to enable the employee to do so;
- Considering whether redeployment support is appropriate and whether any adjustments can reasonably be made to assist with redeploying the employee to a suitable available vacancy;
- Where the employee is able to return from long-term sick leave, to their existing job or a redeployed job, agreeing a return to work programme; and/or
- Agreeing a way forward, action that will be taken and a time-scale for review and/or a further review meeting(s).

Possible outcomes may include:

- Adjourning the meeting to obtain further medical evidence;
- A return to work programme, possibly with a phased return to work (where the employee has been absent for a long period);

- Where the employee has been absent on a number of occasions, issuing a Final Improvement Notice setting out the required improvement in attendance. The employee should be advised that if the requisite improvement is not achieved this may result in further formal action, which may include dismissal;
- Consideration of other options such as redeployment support or retirement on ill-health grounds; and/or
- No further action at this stage.

If agreed attendance levels are exceeded prior to the end of the review period, the sickness review meeting may be brought forward accordingly.

Line managers must discuss individual cases with Human Resources prior to issuing a Final Improvement Notice.

A copy of the Final Improvement Notice will be retained on the employee's personnel file. The Final Improvement Notice will remain active for a specified period (e.g., twelve months) after which time it will be disregarded.

### Formal Stage 3 Absence Review Meeting

A formal Stage 3 Absence Review Meeting may be held when an employee has been unable to return to work, a return-to-work programme has been unsuccessful or an employee's absence levels have continued to be in excess of those set out in the formal stage two absence monitoring period and/or remain a concern.

The employee must be informed in writing that an outcome of the Stage 3 Absence Review Meeting could be dismissal.

The Stage 3 Absence Review Meeting will be conducted by the Head of Department or other senior manager who will be accompanied by a member of Human Resources. The employee's manager will also attend the meeting to provide details of the sickness absence and steps taken to address it.

The purpose of a Stage 3 Absence Review Meeting may include:

- A review of the meetings that have taken place and matters discussed with the employee to date;
- A review of the history of the employee's absence, its effect on the College and any actions previously taken to address the situation, including any support provided to the employee;
- The consideration of any medical evidence obtained;
- In the case an employee remains on long-term sickness absence, considering whether there have been any changes since the last meeting under stage two of the procedure either as regards a possible return to work, permanently reduced hours or opportunities for return or redeployment support;
- Considering any matters that the employee wishes to raise such as mitigating factors;
- Considering whether there is a reasonable likelihood of the employee returning to work or achieving the desired level of attendance in a reasonable time;
- Considering alternative options or ill-health retirement; and/or

- Considering, after all other options have been considered, the possible termination of employment.

Following the meeting, the Head of Department or another senior manager, may consider one or more of the following options (this list is not exhaustive):

- To extend a Final Improvement Notice and set a further review period (where a substantial improvement in attendance is likely within the review period);
- To consider other options such as redeployment support, ill-health retirement or other appropriate action short of dismissal;
- To dismiss on grounds of capability (ill-health); or
- No further action.

If dismissal is recommended, Statute XVII Part IV should be followed for academic staff. For all other College employees, the decision to dismiss on the grounds of unsatisfactory attendance or ill health capability is made under the Sickness Absence Policy. The Head of Human Resources should be consulted in advance of the proposed dismissal of any employee.

The decision will be confirmed in writing within ten working days of the meeting. The letter shall also notify the employee of their right to appeal. In the event that the decision is taken to dismiss the employee, the letter will include the reasons for dismissal, the date that their employment will terminate and the right of appeal.

### Ill-health Retirement

Ill-health retirement should be considered before any decision to dismiss is taken under this policy. Guidance and advice on Ill-Health Retirement should be sought from Human Resources.

The option for ill-health retirement is subject to meeting the eligibility criteria set out by the relevant pension provider and advice should be sought from the relevant pension provider and Occupational Health.

### Appeals

Every employee has the right to appeal against the outcome of any formal review stage of the absence procedure. The basis of an appeal should normally relate to one of the following areas:

1. that the procedure had not been followed correctly.
2. that the resulting action was inappropriate.
3. that the need for action was not justified.
4. that new information regarding the employee's absence has arisen

An appeal should be made in writing to the Bursar. The letter of appeal may be constructed by the employee or their representative. The letter should contain the grounds for appeal and should be lodged within 7 working days of receipt of the issue of a formal letter. An appeal hearing should be arranged within 7 working days of receipt of the appeal letter. An appeal against Dismissal will be considered in the same way, but should be heard by a senior Manager who has not previously been involved in the case.

## Appendix 1

### Return to Work Interview Form Template

Following each occasion of sickness absence, irrespective of length of absence, your Line Manager (or designated deputy) must carry out a Return-to-Work Interview and complete the Return-to-Work interview form. The purpose of the return-to-work interview is to:

1. Establish the reason for the absence
2. Discuss the employee's attendance record overall
3. Explore any underlying problems
4. Establish any support requirements

This form also provides self-certification for the first 7 days of absence.

If you are returning to work after a period of sickness of more than 7 calendar days one or more Statements of Fitness for work (Fit Note) should already have been provided to cover the period of absence in excess of these first seven days.

<b>Employee Name:</b>	<b>Job title:</b>
<b>Department:</b>	<b>Line Manager:</b>
<b>Sickness Reason: Select from drop down</b>	
<b>Date absence began:</b> Click to enter date	<b>Date returned to work:</b> Click to enter date
<b>Number of days absent:</b>	
<b>Summary of discussion – record discussion about amount of absence taken, effects of the absence, explanations given, possible disability/underlying health conditions etc.</b>	

<b>Did you discuss a requirement for improvement in attendance?</b>	<b>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (cross applicable box by clicking)</b>
<b>Has this absence triggered the formal stages of the College's Sickness Absence Policy?</b>	<b>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (cross applicable box by clicking)</b>
<b>If yes, outline the expectation and timeframe for improvement</b>	
<b>Has the need for an Occupational Health referral been discussed?</b>	<b>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (cross applicable box by clicking)</b>
<b>Is an Occupational Health referral required?</b>	<b>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (cross applicable box by clicking)</b>
<b>Date of follow up meeting (if required):</b>	<b>Click or tap to enter a date.</b>

I confirm that I was unfit for work due to sickness in the period stated above and that this is an accurate account of my absence, which will be used for calculating my sick pay entitlement and for recording/ monitoring my sickness absence. I understand that making a false statement may result in disciplinary action and sick pay being withheld.

I also understand that the College treats personal data collected during the sickness procedure in accordance with its data protection policy on processing special categories of personal data. Information about how your data is used and the basis for processing your data is provided in the College's staff privacy notice.

Signed (Employee):	
Date:	
Signed (Manager):	
Date:	

Once the form has been completed, please return to the HR Department via email: [hr@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:hr@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk)

## Appendix 2 – Conducting Formal Meetings

Managers should seek to resolve sickness absence issues informally wherever possible. However, if informal action is not considered appropriate or has not succeeded in improving attendance to an acceptable level, the employee will be required to attend a formal Absence Review Meeting.

The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend a meeting. If the employee or their companion are unable to attend at the time specified the employee should immediately inform the manager holding the meeting, who will seek to agree an alternative time. If the employee feels unable to attend for a reason related to their health, they should inform the manager holding the meeting. Consideration can then be given to holding the meeting at a neutral venue or alternative arrangements made where appropriate, such as holding the meeting over the telephone. Failure to attend a meeting without good reason may be treated as misconduct, or may result in the meeting proceeding in the absence of the employee. Guidance should also be sought from Human Resources.

During the course of a formal Absence Review Meeting, it may be decided that a further period of monitoring is necessary or additional information is required. In such circumstances, the meeting will be adjourned and reconvened at a later date. When determining an appropriate monitoring period, the manager will discuss with the employee what is considered reasonable in the circumstances, taking into account the nature of the employee's illness.

A decision will be made when the manager leading the meeting is satisfied that both the employee and/or their representative have had sufficient opportunity to state their case and that no further information is required.

The outcome of the Absence Review Meeting will be communicated to the employee verbally wherever possible. The employee will also receive written confirmation of the outcome, which will explain the reasons for the decision reached and the right to appeal. This should be provided within ten working days of the meeting (unless this timescale is not practicable, in which case it will be provided as soon as possible).

If at any time the employee's manager considers, based on reasonable evidence, that the employee has taken or is taking sickness absence when they are not unwell, or is not following the required sickness absence reporting procedure, they may refer the matter to be dealt with under the relevant disciplinary procedure. Managers should seek advice from Human Resources.

## Appendix 3 – Menopause

### Introduction

The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 but can also occur in younger women. It happens when the ovaries run out of eggs and the hormones estrogen, progesterone and testosterone fall. The perimenopause is the time before the menopause when hormone levels start to decline and symptoms start.

Perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms can last many years and even decades for some women. These symptoms can include hot flushes, anxiety, insomnia, problems with concentration and memory, fatigue, headaches, muscle and joint pains, urinary symptoms and low mood.

For many women these are debilitating symptoms that adversely affect their daily life, work, relationships and also their future health as menopausal women have a greater risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes, clinical depression and dementia.

While the menopause isn't often talked about at work, it's where people can find their symptoms most difficult to manage. Around half find it difficult to cope with work during the menopause. It is therefore crucial that action is taken to support employees and encourage open and respectful conversations about the menopause.

The purpose of this appendix is to assist with creating an open and honest workplace where managers and employees can discuss any issues associated with the menopause, and to ensure the necessary support is known and offered to employees when needed.

### Communication

It is important that, as an employee, you prioritise your personal health and wellbeing. If you are struggling with any aspect of your role as a result of symptoms associated with the menopause, you should report any concerns you may have to your manager, who will treat the matter with complete confidence. In order to ensure we can provide you with the best support possible we encourage you to be open and honest in these conversations. Alternatively, your manager may instigate a discussion with you if he/she notices a change in your behaviour or performance.

We understand that you may feel uncomfortable discussing personal information with your manager. If this is the case you are encouraged to discuss your situation with another senior member of staff, Human Resources, or the Bursar. During any discussions, your manager will consider your individual situation and evaluate if any adjustments can be made. Your individual needs will be addressed sensitively and confidentiality will be maintained. Managers will also arrange follow up sessions in order to evaluate the effectiveness of any adjustments put in place. A referral to Occupational Health may be arranged.

### Adjustments



In order to assist you in your daily duties, your manager will explore making adjustments to your role or working environment with the aim of reducing the effect that the menopause is having on you. Risk assessments will be consulted to identify potential issues but we acknowledge that the menopause affects each individual in different ways so no adjustment will be made without fully discussing it with you first.

Examples of adjustments include:

- changing your working location so you are closer to toilet facilities, away from hot and cold spots around the office or to ensure greater access to natural light
- allowing changes to our normal rules on work wear
- implementing further temperature control, such as access to a fan
- assessing how work is allocated and whether you are affected at particular points of the day
- allowing additional rest breaks
- considering flexible working hours or allowing you to work from home

Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect. Advice from Occupational Health may be sought in making any adjustments.

The College is legally obliged by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to an employee's role or working conditions if they have a disability that places them at a disadvantage when performing their role and we will ensure compliance with our obligations in this regard.

Useful Reading

- [ACAS Guidance](#)
- [Balance - Menopause Support](#)
- [Daisy Network](#)
- [Henpicked](#)
- [Let's Talk Menopause](#)
- [Menopause Matters](#)
- [NICE Guidelines](#)
- [Women's Health concern fact sheets](#)
- [www.womenofacertainstage.com](http://www.womenofacertainstage.com)
- <https://womenofacertainstage.lpages.co/free-menopause-the-basics>
- [Menopause café](#)
- [The Menopause Charity Support on menopause](#)

## Appendix 4 – Absence Related to Covid-19

From 1 April 2022 all mandatory COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. However, the College still has a statutory duty to take reasonable steps to protect employees. This document outlines the approach College will take when dealing with positive Covid-19 cases amongst staff.

The College continues to provide lateral flow tests to staff and students and these are readily available from the Lodge.

Staff who test positive for Covid-19 should remain at home until they return a negative lateral flow test.

Unwell staff (with COVID-19 or otherwise) should remain at home. Ill employees are entitled to occupational sick pay and should report their absence in the usual way in accordance with the College's Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.

Staff who are well, or asymptomatic, can continue working from home. Staff that are unable to work from home should remain off work until they return a negative lateral flow test. This absence will be treated as special paid leave and should be recorded on Cintra in the usual way.

Staff who are well, or asymptomatic, should report their positive test to their line manager notifying them they are asymptomatic. Regular contact should be maintained. In certain circumstances, the line manager may ask to see photographic proof of a positive lateral flow test.

The process is outlined below:

