

Attendance Management

Employees' Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

We are fully committed to supporting all employees to maintain regular attendance at work. We recognise that some absence due to sickness is inevitable and want to ensure that absence is dealt with in a fair and consistent way.

You have a responsibility to familiarise yourself with the requirements of the Attendance Management Policy and should let your manager know if there are any problems or issues that may have an impact on your attendance/health so that appropriate support can be put in place to help you.

Table of Contents

✔ Reporting my absence	p.01
✔ Reasons for my absence	p.01
✔ Recording and certifying my absence	p.03
✔ Occupational Health (OH)	p.04
✔ During my absence	p.05
✔ Returning to work	p.06
✔ Absence Review Procedure	p.07
✔ What support is available?	p.09

Reporting my absence

<p>What should I do if am too unwell to attend work?</p>	<p>You should call your manager as soon as you can on the first day of your absence, and no later than one hour after your normal expected start time that day. This is important so your manager can ensure that alternative cover arrangements can be put in place and you receive any immediate support, if required.</p> <p>If you cannot get hold of your manager, you should leave a message (including a contact telephone number) with another manager and expect to receive a call from your manager as soon as possible.</p>
<p>If I am too unwell or unable to contact my manager personally, what should I do?</p>	<p>There may be very exceptional circumstances where you are unable to call your manager yourself and in those cases, you should arrange for someone else to make contact on your behalf. This person should confirm why you are absent, when you expect to be back at work (if known) and when you will be in contact.</p> <p>If you are still unable to make contact at that point, for example if you have been hospitalised, you should arrange for someone else to make contact on your behalf again.</p>
<p>What should I tell my manager when I report my absence?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Why you are absent ☑ When you expect to be back at work ☑ Details of any medical/specialist appointments that you have arranged ☑ If you have any urgent work that requires attention or needs covered in your absence
<p>How often should I speak with my manager when I am off sick?</p>	<p>If your absence is likely to continue beyond one day, you and your manager should agree how, and when, contact will next be made. Keeping in touch is important and at each point of contact, you and your manager should agree when contact will next be made. Contact should be made via telephone, but there may be exceptional circumstances where it is appropriate for another method of communication and if this is the case, you should agree this with your manager.</p> <p>In cases of long-term absence (over four weeks), it is expected that contact will generally be made at least every two weeks, as a minimum.</p>
<p>What happens if I don't report my absence?</p>	<p>You should be aware that if you don't report your absence without good reason, your absence may be deemed unauthorised, and this may result in the withholding of sick pay and possibly disciplinary action. We also have a legal obligation to report any unauthorised absence of more than ten days of non-resident workers (out-with the EEA) that we sponsor, to UK Visas and Immigration.</p>

Reasons for my absence

<p>What should I do if I believe that my absence has been</p>	<p>You are encouraged to raise this with your manager when initially reporting your absence. You can always speak with an alternative manager or HR if you would rather</p>
--	---

<p>caused or exacerbated by work-related issues?</p>	<p>not discuss the work-related circumstances with your manager. Without awareness of the situation we are unlikely to be able to address the issues.</p> <p>The type of support or intervention your manager may consider, in discussion with yourself will be dependent upon the circumstances. Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing a stress risk assessment; • Facilitated conversations or mediation; • Reasonable adjustments; • OH referral (with your consent); • Counselling via the Employee Assistance Programme; • Additional training; • Identification of additional support such as internal networks, external organisations etc.
<p>What should I do if I believe that my absence is fully or partly due to interpersonal relationship difficulties at work?</p>	<p>You are encouraged to raise this with your manager when initially reporting your absence. You can always speak with an alternative manager or HR if you would rather not discuss your circumstances with your manager. They will be able to advise you of available options to address these concerns or signpost you to other support, for example mediation or the Employee Assistance Programme.</p>
<p>What should I do if I believe that my absence is due to an underlying medical condition or a disability?</p>	<p>You are encouraged to raise this with your manager when initially reporting your absence. Without awareness of your situation, we are unlikely to be able to offer you the support that you may need. It may be helpful to explore any previous adjustments or any aids that may have helped in the past.</p> <p>We are committed to the development of a diverse workforce and supporting employees who have a disability. We will always endeavour to provide necessary support and explore the possibility of making reasonable adjustments to enable employees continue in their employment.</p> <p>It is expected that in the majority of cases it will be appropriate to involve Occupational Health (OH) to help identify potential support measures that may be appropriate.</p> <p>If there may be a potential or actual health and safety concern, then advice may be sought from the Health & Safety team.</p> <p>In some cases, it may not be possible to make reasonable adjustments to a role and we will make every reasonable effort to redeploy employees unable to carry out their current role/duties wherever possible.</p>
<p>What if my absence is due to my pregnancy?</p>	<p>You are encouraged to raise this with your manager when initially reporting your absence. You can always speak with HR if you would rather not discuss your circumstances with your manager. We may seek to refer you to Occupational Health (OH) to ensure that necessary support and any required adjustments are put in place.</p> <p>If you are absent wholly or partly because of a pregnancy-related illness within four weeks of the due date, your period of maternity leave will automatically begin.</p> <p>Sickness absence related to pregnancy should be recorded on HR Connect in the normal way but it will not be taken into account when reviewing attendance targets.</p>

<p>What if my absence is due to alcohol or substance dependency?</p>	<p>You are encouraged to raise this with your manager when initially reporting your absence. You can always speak with HR if you would rather not discuss your circumstances with your manager. We are committed to supporting employees who may have become dependent on alcohol or drugs at the earliest opportunity but expect them to commit to help themselves and follow treatment and professional advice. Your manager will seek to refer you to Occupational Health (OH) to ensure that necessary support is put in place.</p>
---	---

Recording and certifying my absence

<p>Who records my absence on HR Connect?</p>	<p>Your manager will record your absence on HR Connect when you report it to them. On your first day back, you should check that the start date and reason for your absence have been correctly entered into HR Connect by your manager (amending if required) and input the end date which is the last day of sickness, not the date you return to work. It is important that you do this and 'close' your absence on HR Connect to avoid any unnecessary adverse impact to your pay.</p> <p>You can obtain further information about updating HR Connect here</p>
<p>Can I self-certify my absence?</p>	<p>You are able to self-certify any periods of absence up to seven calendar days on HR Connect when you return to work.</p>
<p>When is a fit note required?</p>	<p>If your absence lasts for more than seven calendar days on a continuous basis, you are required to obtain a 'fit note' (statement of fitness for work) from your doctor, medical specialist or hospital doctor to cover your absence from the eighth day of absence.</p> <p>You can obtain further information about fit notes here</p>
<p>What should I do when I receive a fit note?</p>	<p>You should call your manager to let them know that you have a fit note and discuss the contents of it with them.</p>
<p>Where should I send the fit note?</p>	<p>You should send a copy of your fit note to Human Resources, 5th Floor, Edinburgh Napier University, Sighthill Campus, Edinburgh EH11 4BN. HR will record the details of your fit note against your open absence record on HR Connect and inform your manager that a fit note has been received.</p> <p>You should retain the original for your own records as you may need it for benefits, or other purposes.</p>
<p>What does it mean if my fit note states that I 'may be fit' for work?</p>	<p>If your doctor considers that you may be able to return to work with some help from your employer, they may advise that you 'may be fit for work' on your fit note and provide recommendations. You should discuss these with your manager.</p> <p>Through these discussions your manager will identify if a return to work can be supported and if so, on what basis. It may be appropriate to refer you for an Occupational Health assessment at this stage to obtain further information about the support that we can put in place to help you return to work.</p>

	If it is not possible to implement the suggestions on the fit note and support a return to work at that time your manager will explain this to you and your fit note will be treated as 'not fit for work'.
Do any agreed adjustments/support have to be put in place for the full duration of the fit note?	Not necessarily. Regular reviews should be undertaken to ensure that any adjustments/actions that have been put in place continue to support your return to work. Where it is identified that these are no longer required and you are able to return fully to your normal duties and working hours, the additional adjustments/support can cease.
If I am signed off not fit for work but feel better before the expiry of my fit note, can I return to work early?	If you feel better before the expiry date of your fit note, you should contact your manager to discuss returning early. Depending on the circumstances of your absence, we may seek to make a referral to Occupational Health or advise you to return to your doctor to receive an updated fit note.
When do I have to return to work?	<p>Once your fit note expires you are expected to either return to work on your next working day or let your manager know when you are next going to your doctor. You are required to provide another fit note to cover your absence within three working days from the expiry of the last fit note.</p> <p>You should be aware that absence not covered by a fit note, or if fit notes do not cover your period of absence continuously, may result in your absence being recorded as unauthorised and therefore unpaid.</p>

Occupational Health (OH)

When should I expect to be referred to Occupational Health (OH)?	<p>If you are absent, or likely to be absent, for a period of four weeks or more you should expect to be referred to Occupational Health (OH).</p> <p>An OH referral will also be sought if your absence is due to stress, a mental health condition, an illness that is pregnancy-related or a workplace accident/injury that has lasted for 3 days or more.</p> <p>An OH referral may also be sought if a potential cause for concern has been identified, for example where you have been absent on a frequent basis. If you have informed your manager that you have an underlying health condition or a disability, it may be appropriate to seek to refer you to OH.</p>
What is the purpose of an OH referral?	<p>The role of OH is to advise both you and your manager about the impact of your medical condition on your ability to do your role and provide recommendations about any adjustments that may help to facilitate your return to work and/or support you at work.</p> <p>You can find out more information about the University's OH provider here.</p>
What happens if I do not want to attend an OH assessment?	Your manager will explain to you why they wish to refer you to OH and your consent is required before a referral can be progressed.

	<p>If you do not wish to attend an OH assessment and withhold consent, it may mean that decisions have to be made about your continued employment without the benefit of occupational medical input, which may be detrimental to you.</p>
<p>What happens if I am unable to attend my OH assessment?</p>	<p>It is important to prioritise attendance at an OH assessment so that appropriate support can be put in place promptly to help you return to work, or help you whilst you are at work.</p> <p>If you are unable to attend your appointment, you should contact OH to make alternative arrangements, providing them with as much notice as possible. This allows us to potentially offer the appointment to someone else.</p> <p>We incur a non-attendance fee in the event that an employee does not turn up to a pre-arranged OH assessment.</p>
<p>What happens at an OH assessment?</p>	<p>OH will contact you to make the arrangements for the appointment. You will be assessed by a trained OH Physician or OH Advisor. OH assessments will normally explore aspects of your medical background, your current medical condition and the effect that it has, or may have, on your role. You may be asked questions which you feel are already answered in your file; this is to ascertain your views on your medical history and the impact on your role.</p> <p>It will be explained to you that a report will be generated as part of the assessment process and generally what the report will say. At that stage, your consent will be sought to release such a report. You have the option to consent the release of the report without seeing it first; consent the release of the report but receive a copy at the same time or consent the release of the report but only after a copy has been received giving you the option to review and request amendments to factual information first.</p> <p>Telephone consultations can be arranged, depending upon the circumstances.</p>
<p>What happens after the OH assessment?</p>	<p>OH will produce a report which will either be sent to you first for review, or sent to HR. Upon receipt of the report, HR will share the report with your manager.</p> <p>Your manager will then contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss the report together and agree next steps.</p>

During my absence

<p>How often should I keep in touch with my manager?</p>	<p>It is important to keep in touch with your manager and the frequency of this contact will be dependent upon the circumstances and nature of your medical condition. Each time you are in contact, you should jointly agree with your manager when you will next make contact.</p> <p>In cases of long-term absence (over four weeks), it is expected that contact will generally be made at least every two weeks, as a minimum.</p>
---	---

<p>Can I undertake any form of alternative work in addition to my University role, when signed 'unfit' for work?</p>	<p>The normal expectation is that you should not undertake any form of paid or unpaid alternative work during a period of sickness absence. However, we recognise that on occasion and depending upon the circumstances, undertaking some form of activity/work may be beneficial in supporting an employee's recovery, e.g. voluntary work.</p> <p>Such activity should only be undertaken with the agreement of your manager who will, where appropriate seek advice from HR and potentially OH, to ensure that it does not impede your recovery.</p>
<p>I had a personal holiday booked but I was ill, how are those days treated?</p>	<p>You may reclaim personal holidays lost through sickness as long as you inform your manager on the first day you became sick, or as soon as practicable thereafter, and provide a medical certificate to cover the absence, regardless of the duration.</p> <p>You cannot reclaim days that you would not normally work, e.g. a fixed leave day or a weekend day.</p> <p>You should note that if you have been prevented from taking your statutory leave entitlement (28 days per year, pro-rated for employees who work on a part-time basis) by the end of the leave year (31 August) due to sickness absence, you can carry part or all of your untaken statutory leave into the next year.</p>
<p>My OSP is due to reduce, can I receive pay for holidays that I have accrued whilst being off sick?</p>	<p>It is a possibility to receive a payment for holidays accrued during a period of long-term sickness absence depending upon your individual circumstances. Consideration would be given to any expected return date, the likelihood of a phased return back to work and your statutory annual leave entitlement.</p>
<p>Can I carry over annual leave if I have been unable to take it due to sickness absence?</p>	<p>Annual leave should be used in the leave year that it accrued. However, if you have been prevented from taking your statutory leave entitlement (28 days per year, pro-rated for employees who work on a part-time basis) by the end of the leave year (31 August) due to sickness absence, you can carry part or all of your untaken statutory leave into the next year. It must be used by the end of that leave year or it will be deemed lost.</p>

Returning to work

<p>When can I return to work?</p>	<p>You should return to work as soon as you feel well enough to do so. In some circumstances, this might be before your fit note runs out, as you may have recovered faster than the doctor expected. In this situation, you can return to work with the agreement of your manager.</p>
<p>Do I need to go back to the doctor before I return to work?</p>	<p>Your doctor will say on your fit note if they need to see you again. Therefore, unless requested, you do not need to see your doctor again before you return to work. Depending on the circumstances of your absence, we may seek to make a referral to OH prior to your return to work.</p>

<p>What happens when I return?</p>	<p>Your manager will invite you to attend an informal return to work (RTW) meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that you are fit to be back to work and may cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cause of your absence and whether there are any issues which may be affecting your ability to attend work; • Establish if there are any support mechanisms that may be beneficial to you following your return to work; • Assess whether any further action may be necessary, and what this might be. • Update you on anything that has happened at work during the period of your absence.
<p>Do I need to record my return to work on HR Connect?</p>	<p>On your first day back, you should check that the start date and reason for your absence have been correctly entered into HR Connect by your manager (amending if required) and input the end date which is the last day of sickness, not the date you return to work. It is important that you do this and 'close' your absence on HR Connect to avoid any unnecessary adverse impact to your pay.</p>

Absence Review Procedure

<p>What is an absence review point?</p>	<p>Previously this was known as an '<i>absence trigger</i>'. Attendance is monitored on an ongoing basis and an absence review point will occur in the following situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there have been three or more occurrences of sickness absence in any six-month rolling period; • Where there is a concern regarding absences, patterns or partial day absences; • Where an absence has been for a continuous period of four weeks or more. <p>It is important to understand the reasons for absence so that appropriate support can be provided to help employees achieve the expected level of attendance.</p>
<p>What is an improvement target?</p>	<p>If you have been absent on a number of occasions, it may be appropriate to set an improvement target over a specified period (review period) to support a sustained improvement in your attendance. There will be regular review meetings held during the period.</p> <p>If an employee does not have a disability or underlying health condition, we expect them to have less than three occurrences of sickness absence in any six-month rolling period and this should be the starting point when setting an improvement target for them.</p> <p>If an employee has a disability or underlying medical condition, then we will discuss with them what level of attendance is considered reasonable in the circumstances, taking into account their health condition and relevant medical information.</p> <p>If the required improvement in attendance is achieved there would be no further action at this stage, however if the agreed improvement target is not met, it may be appropriate to progress to the next stage of the attendance review procedure.</p>

<p>What support will I receive if my absence reaches a review point?</p>	<p>If your level of sickness absence reaches a review point, or if your manager has concerns about your absence, they may have an informal discussion with you about your attendance record. The purpose is to understand if there are any underlying issues or mitigating factors, which have contributed, or are contributing to the absence. Your manager will explore appropriate support measures and ways in which you could improve your attendance with you.</p> <p>It may be appropriate to seek to refer you to OH or to set an improvement target over a specified period with regular reviews held during this time, depending upon your circumstances.</p> <p>In most cases, informal discussions between you and your manager will help both parties understand any health conditions and the support required without the need to progress to the formal procedure.</p> <p>We would encourage you to be open in these meetings and discuss any issues or health condition that may be affecting your ability to perform your role.</p>
<p>Why have I been invited to attend a formal stage 1 or 2 attendance review meeting?</p>	<p>If your level of attendance continues to be of concern and informal support is no longer appropriate, or has not succeeded in improving your attendance to an acceptable level, it may be appropriate to invite you to attend a stage 1 or 2 formal attendance review meeting.</p> <p>The purpose of this meeting is to discuss your absence record and establish if there are any other support mechanisms or adjustments that could help you maintain regular attendance at work.</p> <p>After the meeting you will receive a letter from your manager that summarises the discussion including any appropriate support measures that will be put in place and where appropriate, the expected improvement and period in which your attendance will be monitored.</p>
<p>Why have I been invited to attend a formal long-term attendance review meeting?</p>	<p>If you are absent on a long-term basis (over 4 weeks) and an OH report has been received it will normally be appropriate to invite you to a long-term attendance review meeting. If you continue to be absent on a long-term basis, or if a return to work programme has been unsuccessful, you will be invited to attend further long-term attendance review meetings at regular intervals.</p> <p>The purpose of this meeting is establish how you are, discuss the likely duration of your absence and review any new medical advice. It provides an opportunity to discuss if there are any other appropriate support measures that would improve your health, or facilitate your return to work.</p> <p>After the meeting, you will receive a letter from your manager that summarises the discussion and confirms any appropriate support measures or reasonable adjustments that will be put in place.</p>
<p>Why have I been invited to a capability hearing?</p>	<p>There are two circumstances where you may be invited to attend a capability hearing:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ You have not achieved or sustained the required level of improvement in attendance during a stage 2 review period and your level of absence remains a concern; ☺ You have been absent from work on a long-term basis, and there is no reasonable prospect of you returning to work in a reasonable timeframe. You have been absent for extended periods (not necessarily a continuous period) and your level of attendance is not sustained and remains a cause for concern. Reasonable adjustments, redeployment and ill health retirement are normally explored in advance; however, these may be discussed further at the hearing. <p>The purpose of a capability hearing is to consider your full absence history, taking into account any OH advice and what (if any) reasonable adjustments that have been put in place in order to determine next steps.</p>
Can I be accompanied at a formal meeting?	A work colleague, a trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union may accompany you at a formal meeting.
Can I appeal the outcome of a formal meeting?	You may appeal against the outcome of any of the formal stages of the attendance review procedure.

What support is available?

What support is available to me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ Human Resources – Call HR on x3344 or email HumanResources@napier.ac.uk ☺ Trade Union representative – If you are a member of the EIS or UNISON you can contact your trade union representative. ☺ Employee Assistance Programme – you have access to a free, confidential and independent resource that provides information, resources and counselling on a range of different issues. You can access this service via phone, email or online and it is available 24 hours a day. You can access this service here. ☺ Occupational Health – you can obtain further information here.
Can I apply for ill health retirement?	It is always our aim to help you back to work after a long illness. However, if a return to work within a reasonable period is not possible, ill health retirement may be a possibility (if you are a pension scheme member) prior to considering termination of your employment on the grounds of capability (ill health). HR can provide you with further advice about the process for applying for ill health retirement.