



Sickness & Absence Policy

Introduction

York St John Students' Union (YSJSU) has a commitment to supporting the development of a healthy workforce. YSJSU seeks to actively identify and eliminate any factors within the workplace or work process which may have a negative impact on the health of the individual. To enable YSJSU to achieve its corporate aims it is essential that all members of staff are able to contribute effectively to the organisation.

Absences of staff due to sickness has a direct impact upon YSJSU through replacement costs, disruption to work within departments, resulting in increases workload for colleagues, which can lead to increased tension, anxieties and low morale.

The Sickness and Absence Policy plays significant role in facilitating the health and wellbeing of staff. The primary aim of the policy is to put in place processes for actively managing attendance which will optimise the contribution of all employees and be applied fairly and consistently across YSJSU.

Policy Aims

In order to support employees to remain at work, YSJSU seeks to:

- Provide a supportive environment for those employees affected by ill health and ensure that members of staff who experience ill health are treated with understanding and sensitivity whilst facilitating an optimal level of attendance at work.
- Provide a framework for recognition of individuals requiring reasonable adjustment for disability
- Consider adjustments to work activity in the case of individuals who have partially recovered from illness and are unable to maintain the full range of their duties
- Balance the interests of the individual and operational needs of the organisation in the case of long term sickness and debility
- Encourage and develop a positive culture towards attendance

This policy introduces a common reporting procedure for all staff. Line managers are expected to take appropriate action against any member of staff who fails to follow the procedure for reporting sickness absence.

Appropriate training and development will be provided for managers to equip them with the skills and knowledge to implement the policy fairly, sensitively and effectively.

Key Responsibilities

Employees and Sabbatical Officers:

- Maintain regular attendance at work
- Being aware of, and understanding of this policy
- Following the absence reporting procedures
- Maintaining regular contact with their line managers throughout any absence and keeping him/her up to date with progress
- Submitting appropriate medical certificates in a timely manner
- Participating in return to work interviews after any episode of absence
- Cooperating with requests to attend Occupational Health referrals

Managers:

- Managing attendance within their area of responsibility, reviewing sickness absence levels on a regular basis and addressing any areas of concern
- Ensuring that all employees, including new members of YSJSU are aware of, and understand, Sickness and Absence Policy
- Ensuring that absence procedures are followed
- Maintaining regular and reasonable contact with employees during periods of absence, ensuring that they are aware of the individual's progress and likely duration of absence
- Maintaining an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality
- Supporting all employees to facilitate and enable a return to work
- Conducting return to work interviews with all employees after any episode of absence
- Recording accurate absence information

Sickness absence reporting procedure

Employees failing to adhere to the sickness absence reporting procedures will be considered to be on unauthorised absence and may have their pay deducted and be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Absences of one to seven calendar days:

- On the first day of absence employees must inform their line manager no later than half an hour later than you would normally have started work or 12pm whichever is sooner.
- You should call in person unless you are unable to do so. If your line manager is not available you should leave a message with the Info Point.
- Failure to give timely notification may result in sick pay being withheld.
- When informing the line manager by telephone, the employee is required to give an indication of the reason and length of time they expect to be absent and estimated date for return to work.
- If it becomes clear that the individual will be unable to return as indicated, they should contact their manager with an updated estimate as soon as possible.
- In some circumstances an employee will advise that they are feeling unwell so will be working from home. If an employee is not well enough to attend work then this time must be considered as sickness absence.
- If an employee becomes ill whilst at work, they should notify an appropriate manager before leaving. If no manager is available they should email their line manager or advise a relevant member of staff who can then convey the message. If an employee goes home during their working day or shift, this will be counted as sickness absence and will be

recorded for sickness absence purposes. Thereafter, employees must report their absence as above.

- On an employee's return to work, they must complete a Self-Certificate for payroll purposes.
- On return, the employee's line manager will schedule a return to work discussion to welcome the member of staff back, to ensure they are fit to return and establish whether any further joint actions need to be identified. YSJSU Return to Work Form must be completed.

Absences of eight or more calendar days:

- Employees must obtain a Statement of Fitness for work from their GP and submit this to their line manager without delay. Failure to submit a Statement of Fitness for work in a timely manner may result in loss of sick pay.
- The Statement of Fitness for work allows GP's to advise if employees are:
 - Not fit for work
 - May be fit for work

They 'may be fit for work' option, gives GP the option to suggest:

- Phased return to work
- Altered hours
- Amended duties
- Workplace adaptation

Any advice given by GP should be initially discussed between employee and their line manager, prior to the return to work. If it is not possible to make the suggested changes, the employee will need to be sent home from the Return to Work meeting, and will continue on sickness absence, until such a time that YSJSU is able to make the changes suggested by the GP or the GP signs the employee as fit to return to work.

An employee can return to work before the end of the medical certificate statement, if this is agreed between employees and manager agreed by doctor and Occupational Health. Advice should be sought from Occupational Health at this point if necessary, in order to make an informed decision.

- If employee is unable to return to work when the statement expires, further statements must be submitted to cover the on-going absence. Employees should ensure that further statements are sent to YSJSU in a timely manner to ensure the on-going sickness absence is covered by medical certification.
- The GP will specify if they need to assess their patient's fitness for work at the end of the statement period. If the GP does not need to see the patient again, the employee will return to work on their usual duties, at the end of the statement period.

Illness during Annual Leave

Employees who fall sick either during a period of annual leave or just prior to the leave commencing will be permitted to reclaim those days lost though illness where the absence is certified by a medical certificate. This period of absence will then be recorded as sickness absence.

Please note that the sickness absence reporting procedure must still be followed in this circumstance and the requirement to provide a medical certificate applies even where the absence is less than 7 days in duration.

Short term and medium term absence

Short term absence is defined as the period of time covered by a Self-Certificate (up to 7 days' absence). Medium term absence is defined as the period of time anything more than 7 days' and less than four weeks. The following points highlight when it may be appropriate for managers to meet with an employee for an absence review:

- Frequent short term sickness absence
- Unauthorised absence
- Any significant pattern of absence i.e. particular days, reasons etc.
- Four or more episodes of sickness absence in a rolling period of twelve months
- Any absence citing 'stress'

When considering an employee's sickness level, line managers should take into account the personal circumstances of the individual member of staff as well as the nature of the illness.

In circumstances where absence exceeds the acceptable levels, line managers should investigate the reasons for the absences. If there are no extenuating circumstances and there is no evidence of ongoing health problems the manager should explain that the level of attendance is unacceptable, discuss the necessary improvements and timescales and identify what support may be required.

If an employee has a period of absence or a series of absences related to a new or existing disability, this should be noted on the Return to Work Form. Managers should discuss with the employee to establish whether any adjustments are necessary.

A referral to Occupational Health will normally be made once an employee has been absent for four weeks. However, in the case of absence due to, for example, surgery with a known return/recovery date, this may not be necessary.

In case where the level of absence has not improved within agreed timescales and following informal discussion, the line manager should consult with Chief Executive. If appropriate further action will be taken in accordance with the YSJSU Disciplinary Policy.

Long term absence

YSJSU defines absences for period of four weeks or more as long term. Each employee's case should be reviewed as their circumstances progress with the approach taken being determined by the employee's particular circumstances.

YSJSU may seek permission to speak to an employee's GP during their absence to identify if there are steps that can be taken to facilitate an early return to work for the employee.

YSJSU recognises that annual leave is accrued during long term absence and will look favourably on employees who wish to use this leave during sickness absence to offset a period of half pay.

In all cases of long term absence the following general principles will apply:

- Regular and reasonable contact will be maintained between the line manager and the employee. The methods and frequency will depend on the individual's particular circumstances, but may be by telephone, in writing or through meeting at suitable locations.

- Consideration will be given to all options available to facilitate the employee's return to work.

There may be a need to meet with individuals to discuss their on-going sickness absence And the purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Reflect the managers concern about the individual's health
- Clarify the nature of the illness, prognosis and progress
- Discuss what support or assistance can be offered to help the employee return to work
- Discuss any concerns and answer any questions the employee may have about their on-going absence

Sick pay

YSJSU will continue to pay you when you are off sick, as indicated in the table below. The amount you receive depends on a number of things including your length of service and the length of time that you have been off sick.

YSJSU's sick pay is inclusive of Statutory Sick Pay. This means that you will not receive any money on top of your normal salary or half your normal salary whichever is payable at the time.

Sick pay varies according to how long you have worked for YSJSU and is either full or half pay within any period of 12 calendar months as indicated in the following table. Any sick pay you have already received in the previous 52 weeks will be deducted from your entitlement.

Period of continuous service on first day of absence	Full Pay	Half Pay
After 6 months but less than 12 months	1 month	2 months
Over 1 year and up to 2 years	2 months	2 months
Over 2 years and up to 3 years	4 months	4 months
Over 3 years and up to 5 years	5 months	5 months
Over 5 years	6 months	6 months

Term time only staff will receive sick pay if they fall ill during term time (i.e. whilst they are due to be working).

Other attendance concerns

Although a staff member may not have been absent, there may be indications in terms of attendance, that there may be a problem. For example, if an employee is frequently late for work or takes annual leave at short notice. The manager should discuss this with the employee and seek to discover whether there are underlying issues e.g. stress.

Trigger points for lateness would be three in one year. If there are no underlying health issues then the lateness would be managed as a performance matter.

Contact during absence

Managers will keep in regular contact with employees throughout periods of absence whilst ensuring all communications are handled sensitively.

Returning to work from absence

On returning to work after every episode of absence, the line manager will meet with an employee to discuss the absence during a return to work interview. The purpose of this is to ensure that the employee is fit to return and to identify whether any adjustments need to be put in place to enable the employee to maintain attendance.

During the Return to Work Interview, the employee should also complete the 'Sickness Absence: Self Certificate' which should be passed to the HR & Admin Co-ordinator.