

## Appendix 2 – Formal Sickness Absence Management Meeting Guidance

### **Purpose of the meeting:**

- To discuss the cause of the absence;
- To highlight any management concerns in relation to the length or frequency of the absence or any potential pattern emerging;
- To take into consideration any expert guidance or information available from Occ Health / GP / Specialist;
- To explore measures that can reasonably be taken by the employee and the University to mitigate the absence;
- To ensure the importance of an improvement in the individual's attendance is conveyed and to highlight potential consequences if this is not achieved;
- To agree a way forward.

### **Preparation**

- Write to the individual inviting them to meet in accordance with the Policy and explain the purpose of the meeting (advice may be sought from the relevant HR business Partner in drafting the letter);
- Ensure you provide the individual with 5 working days' notice of your request to meet and you highlight their right to be accompanied to the meeting by a work colleague or Trade Union representative of their choice;
- Ensure that you have a suitable location to hold the meeting. It should be held in a suitable environment, i.e. a private location and not in the middle of an open-plan office;
- Ensure you have access to the employee's sickness record and current period of absence and all relevant information for the meeting;
- Be prepared to discuss patterns or trends of absence, following discussion with the relevant HR Business Partner.

### **How to structure the Discussion:**

- Explain the purpose of the meeting and how the individual's absence has triggered;
- Try and determine the cause of absence, be sensitive and calm if personal problems or stress are discussed;

- If the absence is work-related, what can be done to help, i.e. adjustments to work hours, work place or duties. These should be adjustments which are either temporary or which can be supported without compromising the business need;
- Give consideration as to whether a stress risk assessment may be required to identify sources of workplace stress and means of addressing these;
- Establish if the employee is undergoing any treatment, will time off be required for medical appointments etc.;
- Ask if there any other factors contributing to the absence;
- Place current absence in the context of previous absences and explain the impact upon the business / team;
- Agree the next steps, such as a follow-up review, referral to Occupational Health, attend a training course;
- Explain the consequences if an improvement in their attendance record is not achieved.

### **Things to bear in mind:**

- Listen actively – don't assume you already know why the individual has been absent;
- Respect their privacy if they do not wish to discuss the reasons for absence. If this does happen then you can offer them the option to speak to somebody else. If not then you should highlight that if you don't know the problem you are unable to help and their absence will continue to be managed in accordance with the policy.

### **Recording**

- Ensure that the correct certification has been provided;
- Develop and record a joint action plan to support an improvement in attendance - this should be sent to the individual following the meeting without unreasonable delay and copied to the relevant HR Business Partner. The record should include an action plan detailing the steps to be taken by all parties and the timescales within which they will be implemented.