

ATTENDANCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy applies to all members of staff with the exception of senior post holders.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Canterbury College has a duty of care to all its staff, and provides a range of support services through line managers, HR and Occupational Health referrals to help those in need of advice, assistance or support in a wide range of circumstances. Individuals have a duty to the organisation to attend for work on a regular basis. This policy, which will be operated across the College, is designed to inform all staff of the attendance required of them, and to indicate the action that may be taken where their absence level becomes excessive.

The Attendance Policy is about absence from work attributed to sickness. It does not seek to differentiate between absences which are self certified and those supported by a doctor's certificate; the assumption is that where an individual says they are unable to come to work their illness is genuine. If illness is not genuine then the person absent may be committing a disciplinary offence.

In all cases it is vital for management to concentrate on attendance rather than health: the issue is managing absence. Thus whether an individual absence is caused by a genuine illness or not is irrelevant. If there is a medical issue then medical advice and assistance is needed, either from the individual's GP or from the Occupational Health service as appropriate, but the management of attendance is the responsibility of line management.

An overriding principle is that each case will be judged on its individual merits.

Information on reporting, monitoring and dealing with individual absences from work caused by sickness are contained in the Sickness Absence Reporting and Monitoring Procedure, (Section 3 of this document).

MANAGING ATTENDANCE

- 1.1.1 The only fully acceptable attendance standard is 100%, but it is recognised that most people will occasionally be unable to come to work because they are prevented by illness or injury. A small amount of absence is therefore inevitable. However, where in any period of 12 months an individual's Bradford score reaches or exceeds 750, consideration will be given as to whether formal action under this policy is needed. This does not mean that any level up to 350 is acceptable, and in particular if a manager feels that an individual may be abusing the system then they should consider further actions.
- 1.1.2 A high Bradford score will not in all cases require action to be taken. For example, there may be circumstances where a person with a normally good record suffers an injury which causes a series of short absences but only for a limited time, or where a person with an otherwise good record has a known condition which causes regular but brief absences. As mentioned above, each case will be looked at on its merits.
- 1.1.3 The Bradford score is calculated by multiplying the square of the number of absences by the total number of working days lost. For example, someone who was absent from work on 5 occasions with a total of 14 working days off work would have a Bradford score of $5 \times 5 \times 14 = 350$. The Bradford score may be pro-rated to take account of part-time work patterns.

1.1.4 Managers should be aware that the Disability Discrimination Act places an obligation on the College to consider making 'reasonable adjustments' to the work or workplace to allow someone with a significant disability to continue to work. In some cases this will involve a greater tolerance of absence, though most disabled people do not have high levels of absence. Such cases should always be referred to the Human Resources Manager.

1.2 INFORMAL STAGE

1.2.1 Where an individual's Bradford score exceeds 350 their line manager should consider whether action is appropriate. If there is a clear and fully acceptable explanation, no action will be necessary under this policy though it may well be that the person will already be receiving assistance from the Welfare & Benefits Officer.

1.2.2 In all other cases the line manager will speak to the individual. The purpose of this discussion is to draw the person's attention to their absence record, remind them of the College's expectation that their Bradford score remain below 350, and ask if there is any support the College can give to help them. Particular reference should be made to the Welfare & Benefits Officer. In some cases the manager may decide to refer the individual to the Human Resources Manager at this stage. No attempt should be made to debate whether illness or injury is serious enough to justify absence from work - this is a medical matter, not one for line managers.

1.2.3 The individual should also be told that their attendance record will continue to be monitored and that an improvement is required over the next 3 months.

1.2.4 When setting targets for improvement, the manager should liaise with the Welfare & Benefits Officer to ensure that they reflect those of the College and of the work environment of the team in which the employee works.

1.2.5 The Line Manager or Human Resources Manager may also initiate this step if the nature or pattern of the individual's absence record gives rise to concern.

1.3 FIRST FORMAL STAGE

1.31 If within the next 3 months there has been no improvement, or the individual's Bradford score has exceeded 750, their line manager will be asked to advise them that the College wishes to obtain an Occupational Health report to provide an opinion on whether there is any underlying reason, (such as disability), for the poor attendance record, and whether there is a realistic probability of a return to an acceptable standard. On receipt of the report, a formal interview will be arranged.

1.3.2 The Line Manager will write to the employee giving him/her at least 5 working days notice of a formal meeting. The letter will include details of the alleged inadequate attendance and advise the employee of their right to be accompanied by a representative or friend. A member of the College's HR department may also attend in an advisory capacity to see whether there is any appropriate help or advice that can be given. He or she will then provide an opinion to line management as set out above.

1.3.3 The employee will be reminded of the previous discussion, shown their absence record and advised that the required improvement has not been achieved. They will be offered the services of the Welfare & Benefits Officer and reminded of the College's confidential Support Service. Unless there is a fully acceptable explanation, the line manager will issue a formal written warning that there is to be a clear and sustained improvement over the next 3 months, and that a failure to achieve this may result in a final warning. This letter will also set out the employee's right of appeal.

1.3.4 As with Stage One, the case will be dealt with on its merits, i.e. decisions will not be based

purely on the Bradford score, and redeployment may also be considered, (unless in exceptional circumstances).

- 1.3.5 The Principal or Human Resources Manager may initiate the procedure at the second stage if the nature or pattern of the individual's absence gives rise to sufficiently serious concern.

1.4 SECOND FORMAL STAGE

- 1.4.1 If within the next 3 months the individual still does not achieve an acceptable reduction in his or her Bradford score, and there is no acceptable explanation such as injury on duty, a second Occupational Health report will be obtained, to provide an opinion on the reasons for the employee's continued poor attendance record, and to ascertain whether there is a realistic probability of a return to an acceptable standard
- 1.4.2 On receipt of the report, a further formal interview will be arranged, to be chaired either by the Principal or a Director to whom the responsibility has been delegated. The Line Manager will again write to the employee giving him/her at least 5 working days notice, and the letter will include details of the continued alleged inadequate attendance and of the employee's right to be accompanied by a representative or friend.
- 1.4.3 At the meeting, the line manager will explain the background to the case, and summarise the previous discussions. The employee's absence record will be discussed, and they will be given the opportunity to explain why they have not met the required improvement. A member of the College's HR department will also attend in an advisory capacity to see whether there is any further help or advice that can be given, and he or she will then provide an opinion to the Principal/Director as set out above. At this stage, redeployment will again be considered, (unless in exceptional circumstances).
- 1.4.4 Unless there is a fully acceptable explanation, the Principal/Director, after consultation with the Human Resources Manager, will issue a final written warning. This will give details of the individual's absences, the steps taken to aid improvement and of the timescale allowed for improvement, informing the employee that failure to meet the expected standards of attendance may lead to a further disciplinary action which may be dismissal. The letter will also set out the employee's right of appeal.

1.5 CAPABILITY REVIEWS

- 1.5.1 If within the specified timescale the individual still does not achieve an acceptable attendance level, and there is no acceptable explanation, a final Occupational Health report will be obtained, to provide a statement as to whether in his or her opinion there is an underlying medical reason why an acceptable pattern of attendance cannot be achieved. If there is, the Principal/Director will consider whether the individual should be retired on the grounds of permanent ill health.
- 1.5.2 If there is not, and the Occupational Health Doctor is unable to predict a rapid return to good attendance, a further formal meeting will be arranged, to be chaired either by the Principal or a Director to whom the responsibility has been delegated. The Line Manager will again write to the employee giving him/her at least 5 working days notice, and the letter will include details of the continued alleged inadequate attendance and of the employee's right to be accompanied by a representative or friend.
- 1.5.3 The Principal/ Director before deciding whether to dismiss, shall consider with the Human Resources Manager whether alternative employment can be offered to the employee. If such an offer can be made, it should be made in writing, with an explanation as to why it is being made, and the consequences of refusing it. The employee should be given sufficient time to consider the offer and, if he/she wishes, discuss it with his/her representative or friend.

1.5.3 If the offer of alternative employment is rejected by the employee, the Principal/Director shall reconvene the meeting to inform the employee that he/she is considering dismissal. The employee will have the right to be accompanied and will have the opportunity to make comments in mitigation before any decision is taken.

1.6 DISMISSAL

1.6.1 If the Principal/Director decides to dismiss he/she shall notify the employee verbally and confirm the decision in writing. The Human Resources Manager will on behalf of the College issue a letter of dismissal to the employee. The letter shall include:

- i. The decision reached and the date and time from which the dismissal is effective.
- ii. The reason for dismissal.
- iii. Brief details of any relevant previous warnings which are not time expired.
- iv. Details of any notice to be given and holiday entitlement.
- v. The employee's right of appeal.

LONG TERM ILLNESS POLICY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 In managing long term absence there are a number of key principles to be followed:
- i. Staff will be treated consistently and fairly, with appropriate consideration being given to individual circumstances;
 - ii. Individual cases will be treated on their merits;
 - iii. Matters relating to the health of staff will always be treated confidentially;
 - iv. Responsibility for managing attendance at work lies with line managers, with advice and support being available from specialist departments;
 - v. Appropriate monitoring arrangements and use of management information are essential;
- 2.1.2 The College recognises that early intervention and a supportive programme can be the key to an earlier and successful return to work.

2.2 MANAGING LONG TERM ABSENCE

After ten days absence

- 2.2.1 The Welfare & Benefits Officer will write a letter of support to the individual and will accompany this with a copy of the College's sickness policy.

After twenty days absence

- 2.2.2 The Welfare & Benefits Officer will set up a meeting or home visit to discuss the absence, nature of the illness and to ascertain how the College can provide support. The Welfare & Benefits Officer will set up a referral to the Occupational Health Doctor and explain what this entails, how the College will use the report and the individual's right to a copy of that report.
- 2.2.3 The individual should be offered a temporary re-deployment if appropriate.

After thirty days absence

- 2.2.4 Any return to work should be organised by the Welfare & Benefits Officer in accordance with any advice received by the Occupational Health Doctor. The individual should be offered a staged return to work for up to six weeks at the discretion of the Human Resources Manager.

After sixty days absence

- 2.2.5 A home visit should be arranged by the Welfare & Benefits Officer, and where appropriate, the individual will be asked to complete a consent form for the Welfare & Benefits Officer or Human Resources Manager to contact their GP.
- 2.2.6 Permanent re-deployment may be offered to the individual.

After ninety days absence

- 2.2.7 The individual will have a second referral to the Occupational Health Doctor.
- 2.2.8 At this stage it may appropriate to hold a case conference involving the individual, Welfare & Benefits Officer and Occupational Health Doctor. It may also be appropriate to include the Human Resources Manager and where appropriate the College will consider employing the services of an Occupational Therapist to plan and implement the rehabilitation and return to work of the individual.

2.2.9 If no return to work plan is actively being pursued then a capability review should take place, (see Section 2.5 below).

If at any point during this process, the individual fails to respond to the Welfare & Benefits Officer within a reasonable timescale, (despite appropriate reminders), the Human Resources Manager shall write to them to enquire whether he or she still wishes to be employed by the College.

2.3 STRESS RELATED ILLNESS

2.3.1 Although a sensitive approach is required, the College must also ensure that contact is maintained and that active support is given.

2.3.2 The Welfare & Benefits Officer should set up, at the earliest opportunity, a home visit or alternatively one at another location away from the College. At this meeting, the Welfare & Benefits Officer should set out the range of services available. If the stress is home or financially related the individual should be directed to appropriate counselling and advice centres.

2.3.3 If the stress is work related, consideration must be given to ways in which this can be reduced. This might include a temporary reduction in workload.

2.3.4 Temporary re-deployment of up to six months (on existing full pay and conditions) should be offered, and permanent redeployment should also be offered and discussed.

2.3.5 The Principal may grant a period of up to nine months unpaid leave or on half-pay at his or her discretion on the advice of the Occupational Health Doctor or individual's GP.

2.4 CONTACT WITH ABSENT STAFF

2.4.1 In addition to Welfare & Benefits Officer visits, line managers should ensure that regular contact is maintained under the advice of the Welfare & Benefits Officer. This may include updates about work and social visits.

2.4.2 The Welfare & Benefits Officer should ascertain whether social visits would be welcomed.

2.5 CAPABILITY REVIEWS

2.5.1 Where a capability review or Occupational Health report concludes that the individual is unfit to undertake the duties and responsibilities required of their contract of employment, the Human Resources Manager should advise the Principal on the termination of the individual's employment.

2.5.2 The Human Resources Manager should ensure that the following has been checked:

- i. That medical evidence is up to date and adequate.
- ii. The employee has been regularly consulted
- iii. There has been consideration of alternative employment
- iv. Consideration has been given to reasonable adjustments in the workplace
- v. Consideration has been given to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act or other legislation relating to discrimination

2.5.3 A formal meeting will be arranged, to be chaired either by the Principal or a Director to whom the responsibility has been delegated. The Human Resources Manager will write to the employee giving him/her at least 5 working days notice, and the letter will include details of the reason for the meeting and of the employee's right to be accompanied by a representative or friend.

2.5.4 At the meeting, the employee will have the opportunity to make comments in mitigation before any decision is taken.

2.6 DISMISSAL

2.6.1 If the Principal/Director decides to dismiss he/she shall notify the employee verbally and confirm the decision in writing. The Human Resources Manager will on behalf of the College issue a letter of dismissal to the employee. The letter shall include:

- i. The decision reached and the date and time from which the dismissal is effective.
- ii. The reason for dismissal.
- iii. Brief details of any relevant previous warnings which are not time expired.
- iv. Details of any notice to be given and holiday entitlement.
- v. The employee's right of appeal.

3. SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORTING AND MONITORING PROCEDURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 It is the responsibility of the individual to inform the college of any of their absences from work.

3.2 ABSENCE REPORTING

3.2.1 Where possible the individual should notify the college before 8:45 am.

3.2.2 The individual should contact their line manager in the first instance. If this is not possible then the following contacts may be used: (1) Faculty/Departmental Administrator (2) the HR sickness line (01227-464662).

3.2.3 The individual reporting in sick should state:

- i. Their name, post and department
- ii. The nature of the illness
- iii. The expected duration of the absence
- iv. Details of any lessons, tutorials, meetings and appointments that need to be covered or re-scheduled.

3.2.4 The individual will need to report again:

- i. After four days from the initial report
- ii. After eight days from the initial report
- iii. Each day that is beyond either the individual's latest reported return to work or period covered by a sick note

3.2.5 Academic staff in particular should report their absence as early as possible, even to the extent of making contact the day or evening before their absence if there is a reasonable expectation of such an absence. The line manager will make suitable contact arrangements for this purpose. This might take the form of a mobile phone or ansaphone facility.

3.2.6 The line manager should inform the Faculty/Department Administrator of the absence. The Administrator is then responsible for distributing and collecting self certification forms. These forms should be counter signed by the line manager. If forms contain sensitive information regarding the reason for the illness, they may be sent direct to HR. The Administrator is also responsible for informing HR of the absence.

3.2.7 Sick notes should be sent direct to HR as soon as they are due. HR will chase up any overdue sick notes but it is the responsibility of the individual to submit sick notes to HR on time. If sick notes are not received within three working days of their being due, this may lead to a delay in receiving or even loss of pay.

3.2.8 No salary or wages will be paid in the event of unauthorised absences, which includes those relating to illness where a sick note is due but has not been received. Unauthorised absences will be dealt with under the College's disciplinary procedure.

3.3 RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEWS

3.3.1 The line manager should conduct a return to work interview with the individual as soon as possible after the return to work.

3.3.2 The interview should follow the prescribed format, but should be appropriate to the duration and nature of the absence.

3.4 ABSENCE MONITORING

- 3.4.1 It is the responsibility of the line manager to monitor staff illness using information and reporting tools provided by HR.
- 3.4.2 The College uses the Bradford score as a primary means of alerting managers to problems of staff attendance. However, monitoring will also be undertaken using other measures such as categorising absences by short, medium and long term bouts of illness. Information will be made available to managers through the College intranet. Staff will also have access to this information (in so far as it relates to them).