

Managing Unauthorised Absence: Policy and Guidance for Staff and Managers

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Introduction

The University is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of all staff. As part of this commitment the University has a duty of care to its members of staff if they are unexpectedly absent from work. It is therefore important for the University to follow up such situations and make enquiries to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the staff member.

Staff have a responsibility to report absence in line with their departmental reporting procedures and if procedures are not followed, then absence may be deemed to be unauthorised.

1. Policy Statement

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for the management of unauthorised absence within the University of Bristol.

1.2 The purpose of this policy is also to ensure a fair and consistent approach to managing unauthorised absence within the University. It ensures employees are supported appropriately and have access to support services provided by the University

1.3 It is important to act appropriately and proportionately in the event of the **unexpected** absence of any staff member. Aside from management issues, such absence may indicate that the individual is at risk, for example from an accident or an illness. Whilst unauthorised absence can potentially lead to disciplinary action, it is essential that each case is investigated thoroughly to establish the reasons for the absence and the individual circumstances identifying where support maybe needed.

2. Principles

2.1 Any planned absence from work should be authorised in advance by the Line Manager

2.2 Departments/Schools should ensure staff are familiar with the rules around requesting annual leave and reporting absences.

2.3 Failing to turn up to work without legitimate reason could constitute a breach of contract

2.4 Unauthorised absences should be treated as cause for concern and brought to the attention of HR

3. Unauthorised Absence

3.1 Unauthorised absence refers to when a member of staff fails to arrive for work without good reason. It does not include the following:

- When an employee has booked annual leave in advance
- When an employee has requested emergency domestic leave at short notice
- Sickness that has been notified
- Absence due to maternity/paternity/adoption leave
- Absence due to a statutory right such as time off for antenatal care and appointments

3.2 In event that an employee is absent from work without prior notification and they have not been in contact, the Line Manager should contact Faculty/Professional Services Human Resources to discuss management of the unauthorised absence.

3.3 If the Line Manager has not heard from the absent member of staff, they should contact HR without delay to discuss options to manage the unauthorised absence.

3.4 Advice will be given by HR on how the absence should be handled and each case will be dealt with in light of individual circumstances.

4. Procedure

4.1 Line Manager to establish whether the member of staff is absent without prior notification

4.2 If the member of staff is deemed to be absent without prior notification, the Line Manager should contact the Faculty/Professional Services HR team without delay.

4.3 As appropriate HR will make reasonable attempts to contact the individual on behalf of the Line Manager via the contact telephone numbers provided including mobile numbers. If this is unsuccessful and after reasonable attempts, then HR will try and

make contact with the named emergency contact within 48 hours of the member of staff being reported as absent from work.

- 4.4 Where HR are unsuccessful in contacting the individual, the Line Manager will write to the individual using a template letter provided by HR requesting that the staff member gets in touch within 2 working days of the date of the letter noting that if they don't, this may constitute misconduct and the University may consider instigating disciplinary action. All attempts to contact the individual should be noted. The individual should also be notified that if they do not make contact with the University as requested, then pay will also be withheld.
- 4.5 If no response from the individual is received within the timescale requested arrangements should be made to invite the staff member to a disciplinary hearing confirming that the meeting will also likely go ahead even if they do not attend.
- 4.6 Unauthorised absence from work is a potential disciplinary offence and repeated periods of unauthorised absence may be considered to be gross misconduct.
- 4.7 If the staff member fails to follow notification and reporting procedures, and the reason for unauthorised absence was not deemed to be reasonable by the line manager, the University is not obliged to pay for any days that the staff member had unauthorised absence. This should be discussed with HR in the first instance. It is important to investigate each case of unauthorised absence in order to gather facts and information before considering taking any action in respect of the staff member's pay.
- 4.8 Where the decision is made to withhold pay, the staff member must be notified in writing in advance of any changes being made to their pay. This should be discussed with HR in the first instance.

5. Other Considerations

- 5.1 The University is required to report any unauthorised absence of sponsored migrants to the Home Office as if we do not follow their reporting procedures correctly, the University could be in breach of its Home Office Immigration License.

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