

How to manage reasonable adjustments and phased returns

The purpose of this information is for guidance only. The Manager and Human Resources will require to consider each absence on a case-by-case basis to determine the most appropriate measure. Human Resources will offer support and guidance, where requested, at any point of the Sickness Absence Management Procedure.

It is essential all correspondence, meeting notes, occupational health reports and medical documentation is retained confidentially within the staff member's file at every stage of the absence process.

Introduction

Managing reasonable adjustments and phased returns is a key element of effective absence management. Occupational Health (OH) should always be notified where a staff member requests to return to work based on the introduction of reasonable adjustments or a phased return. OH can provide guidance or directions to both Manager and staff member relating to recognising the need for reasonable adjustments and guide a phased return pattern and timeline. Phased returns will not normally exceed six weeks. Dependent on the circumstances of absence OH may request a referral form or provide guidance based on the staff members own GP fit line.

A phased return may coincide with reasonable adjustments. Whilst the phased return will be for a temporary period the reasonable adjustments may be required to continue for as long as the staff member is in employment with the University.

Managing phased returns

Phased return

A staff member may request a phased return due to various reasons, i.e. returning from a long term absence or not fully recuperated following a strain or break. A request of phased return will be supported by a GP line.

Managers must ensure staff members are met with during the phased return period and any light duties or temporary working conditions or hours are reviewed on a regular basis and build until normal duties and timelines are resumed. Human Resources should be made aware of any individual who is unable to meet the demands of their normal duties within the phased return. The staff member, with their consent, will be referred to OH for further review.

Reasonable adjustments

A staff member "may be fit to return" to work if their role is reviewed and modified to suit their current capability.

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Examples of this may be:

- Phased return
- Reduced working hours
- Restricted or adapted duties
- Additional support

Further meetings should continue until the staff member is fit to resume to normal duties or where the individual formally requests (Flexible Working application) a permanent change to their role, for example, reduced working hours. Consultation with the Human Resources Officer prior to any decision being made is essential.

OH will provide guidance as to whether the individual should attend further appointments or if they consider the case to be closed. If OH close the case the staff member will be recognised as fit to work or fit to work following adjustments.

Notes referring to absence reviews should be taken and retained confidentially on the staff member's HR and departmental file. Content and agreed action should be forwarded, in writing, to the staff member, with a copy retained on the staff member's HR and departmental file for future reference

Additional support within the university may relate as reasonable adjustments. Please refer to additional support which may provide necessary equipment, counselling or networks to staff members during their recuperation period.

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