

HEALTH & WELLBEING POLICY

Brief Description (max 50 words)	Approach to managing health and wellbeing at work including Stress and Resilience, Menopause, Drugs and Alcohol, Eye-care, Absence management (long and short term) and Adjustments at work.
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Equality Impact Assessment	This document has been assessed for equality impact on the protected groups, as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This Policy is applicable as outlined in the 'scope' irrespective of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage, or civil partnership.

Amendment History

Version	Date	Reviewer Name(s)	Summary of changes
1.0	Feb 2025	Jo Campbell	New policy - created by combination of all Health and Wellbeing related former policies, with duplication and repetition removed.
1.1	December 2025	Jo Campbell	Guidance regarding when continuous sickness overlaps a service year.
1.2	April 2026	Jo Campbell	Amended to reflect the legislation changes to SSP and the removal of the lower earnings limit.
1.3	July 2026	Jo Campbell	Inclusion of Wellbeing summary. Clarity over phased return to work arrangements.

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Introduction

University of Suffolk is committed to fostering a healthy, safe, and supportive work environment that prioritises the physical and psychological wellbeing of our employees. We aim to create a culture where resilience, happiness, and professional fulfilment thrive, while proactively supporting colleagues experiencing ill-health, workplace stress, or disabilities. Through positive management practices, collaborative conversations, and timely interventions, we aim for individuals to feel valued, supported, and empowered.

Managers and employees each play a vital role in maintaining a culture of wellbeing. Managers are encouraged to practice proactive supervision, identify potential stressors, and act promptly when early signs of increased stress, reduced resilience, or health-related concerns emerge. Employees are encouraged to communicate openly and honestly with their managers and to seek support when needed.

Our approach includes the supportive, timely and fair management of sickness absence, with a focus on promoting recovery, facilitating a return to work, and where reasonable, making necessary adjustments to help individuals remain engaged and productive in their roles. Robust and clear procedures are in place to respond to absences as a result.

With core values and expected professional behaviours embedded in all we do, our aim is to enable everyone to feel safe, supported, and able to achieve their full potential in the workplace.

There are 5 sections within this policy:

- Resilience and stress
- Menopause
- Alcohol, drug and substance misuse
- Sickness absence
- Eyecare

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- University of Suffolk employees
- In addition, the **Alcohol, Drug and Substance misuse guide** applies to:
 - University of Suffolk casual workers

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- Contractors/third parties
- Volunteers
- Customers
- Apprentices
- Interns/work experience placements.

(While not covered by procedural details, they must adhere to the **Alcohol, Drug, and Substance Misuse** guidelines. Failure to comply may result in termination of working arrangements).

Should service conditions apply to any part of this policy, these will be detailed as relevant.

Wellbeing Support Resources

The University provides a range of resources and services to support employee health and wellbeing. These include the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), Occupational Health, wellbeing networks, resources available through the staff intranet, and assistance from managers and the People and Organisational Development (POD) Directorate.

The confidential Employee Assistance Programme is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and provides access to counselling, practical advice, wellbeing information and other support services. Employees are encouraged to access these resources whenever they may benefit from additional assistance. Further information is available through managers, the staff intranet or the People and Organisational Development Directorate.

Roles and responsibilities

The University takes a proactive approach to managing employee health and wellbeing. Wellbeing risks are identified through workforce data, employee feedback, stress risk assessments, occupational health information, sickness absence trends and other wellbeing indicators. Information is reviewed at team, departmental and organisational levels to identify emerging risks, monitor trends and inform wellbeing priorities. Significant wellbeing concerns are escalated through management arrangements and reported/escalated to a University Committee as relevant where appropriate and considered alongside wider organisational risks. The University periodically reviews the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives and support mechanisms to support continuous improvement and ensure that wellbeing activities remain aligned to staff needs and organisational objectives.

Managers

Managers have a vital role in fostering a positive and healthy workplace. They are responsible for understanding and applying organisational policies related to health and wellbeing and ensuring that staff feel supported and able to perform at their best. This includes promoting a culture of wellbeing, modelling healthy work practices, and recognising how their management approach affects individuals and teams. Managers should also attend relevant training to stay informed of best practices and create an environment where people feel valued, empowered, and able to thrive.

People and Organisational Development (POD) Directorate

The People & Organisational Development (POD) Directorate is responsible for delivering the University's People Strategy, which includes fostering a genuine and responsive wellbeing culture. The Directorate takes a proactive and collaborative approach to ensuring that people feel safe, supported, and healthy - both physically and mentally. POD provides advice and guidance to managers on best practices for supporting employee wellbeing. Managers can seek support from POD on applying these policies effectively and ensuring the wellbeing of their teams. Where POD has specific procedural responsibilities, these are detailed in the relevant sections of this policy.

Individuals

All staff have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health, safety, and wellbeing, as well as that of their colleagues. This includes following organisational policies and procedures, managing their workload where possible, and raising any concerns with their manager so that appropriate and timely support can be provided. Employees are also expected to engage with any advice or guidance offered to support their wellbeing. In addition, everyone has a role to play in fostering a supportive workplace culture, which may include bringing concerns about a colleague's wellbeing to the attention of an appropriate manager. Where specific procedures apply, employees must ensure they follow them as outlined in this policy.

Section 1: Resilience & Stress Management

This section of the Health and Wellbeing Policy aims to enhance understanding of resilience and stress, including their causes and impact, while ensuring colleagues who need additional support can access the help they need.

Definitions

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Resilience

Resilience is an individual's ability to recover from or stay well in the face of adversity. In a work setting, this translates in an employee having the capacity to thrive rather than just survive. Resilience helps employees to adapt, cope, and respond positively to stressors in the workplace.

Stress

The Health & Safety Executive defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.” This definition makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive factor if managed correctly, and stress (when pressure becomes excessive) which can be detrimental to health.

Supportive Measures

Employees and their immediate families (living with them) have access to a **confidential, 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme**, including counselling and a wellbeing portal/app. [Details are available](#) on the intranet.

University of Suffolk also provides access to [Occupational Health services](#) for health and wellbeing support. Referrals can be made by individuals or line managers, with guidance from the **People Business Partner**.

For staff returning after a **significant absence** (typically two months or longer), a **phased return** may be agreed based on Occupational Health recommendations. More details are available in the **Sickness Absence** section of this policy.

To support colleagues experiencing **work-related stress**, a **Support Assessment** is recommended to help identify risk factors and appropriate measures. Further information is available [here](#).

Resilience – Understanding and Supporting

Line managers play a crucial role in fostering employee resilience through strong, supportive relationships built on care, compassion, and kindness. Effective management also includes setting motivating goals, celebrating success, coaching, and creating a positive work environment. Managing communication, resources, and people-related issues, such as conflict and sickness absence, proactively helps prevent negative impacts on wellbeing.

CIPD Research identifies the following five behavioural areas as important for managers to support their staff to build individual and team resilience.

- i) **Being open, fair, and consistent** – *being positive and appreciative will help people with confidence and optimism.*

- ii) **Handling conflict and people management issues** – *preventing interpersonal conflict from getting in the way of colleagues providing support for each other.*
- iii) **Providing knowledge, clarity, and guidance** – *develops understanding and ensures that people know what to suspect, feel that their work is manageable and access the resources they need.*
- iv) **Building and sustaining relationships** – *key to building resilience. Supportive, caring relationships built on respect, compassion and kindness reduce stress and help people to thrive.*
- v) **Supporting development** – *builds confidence, purpose, and provides access to resources.*

Interventions at group, leadership and institutional level also help build resilience in employees by creating the conditions in which individuals are enabled to be resilient, such as development programmes, job design, strategies affecting culture change, and business continuity. For further examples of supporting practice and UoS resources, can be found on the staff intranet [here](#).

Stress - Understanding, Identifying, Managing & Preventing

Understanding Stress

We all experience a certain amount of pressure in our daily lives, and this can be a positive contributor to our general health and wellbeing. However, too much pressure or a feeling of losing control in our personal and/or working lives can lead to feelings of stress.

The University recognises that stress in the workplace needs the careful support and intervention of managers to collaborate with individuals to identify and to seek actions to reduce workplace stressors. We seek to support individuals who are affected by stress, (which is primarily caused by feeling under pressure, worry, big changes, lack of control in situations, and having responsibilities that are overwhelming). It is recognised that these factors can derive from both inside and outside of the work environment.

The causes of work-related stress at work can include:

- Conflicting or excessive demands
- Lack of control over the way work is done
- Lack of support from manager(s) and colleagues
- Problems with work relationships (e.g., bullying)
- Lack of clarity about the job role
- Lack of engagement in change

It is worth noting that stress might also be the result of the sheer volume of pressures, rather than a single major event, none of which would be particularly troublesome alone, but taken as a whole, the employee may not be able to cope with them all.

Of course, there are causes of stress unrelated to work (such as bereavement, break down in a relationship, financial problems). External stressors can make it more difficult to cope with pressures at work which might usually be manageable and not cause concern.

The Health & Safety Executive has identified six management standards which, if properly managed, can reduce work related stress

Further information about the HSE management standards can be found at www.hse.gov.uk.

Examples of how to meet each standard is available in the [HSE Stress Workbook](#)

Identification & Management of Stress

Identification of Stress

Most of us encounter stressful experiences from time to time; short-term, the effects of stress are unlikely to cause great harm. However, prolonged exposure to the effects of stress can bring more lasting damage to our physical and mental health, our psychological wellbeing, and to our relationships at home and at work.

People's reactions to stressful situations vary. Reactions may be behavioural or emotional. Some of the more common warning signs are:

- Behaviour that is: critical and negative, humourless, indecisive, irritable, aggressive, withdrawn
- Sleep disorders
- Rapid mood changes
- Panic attacks
- Low self-esteem and self confidence
- Eating, drinking, and smoking more
- Increased emotional reactions (tearful/sensitive/aggressive)
- Uncharacteristic errors

Management of Stress

Psychological safety describes an environment where people feel able to express themselves without fear that others will think less of them and is strongly associated with role clarity and peer support both of which feature in the HSE Standards. Providing such an environment encourages people to be creative and speak up with new ideas and concepts without fear of persecution, ridicule, or retaliation. If employees feel accepted and respected, then their psychological safety will increase alongside resilience and reducing stress at work.

UoS has in place tools and resources which may eliminate or support the reduction of the likelihood of work-related stress, increase psychological safety and improve resilience. These include an Employee Assistance Programme Service, and Values and Behaviours Framework, which promotes positive indicators to drive the ethos of the organisation. Further details can be found in the [Health and Wellbeing page](#) on staff intranet site.

Managers are responsible for reviewing their quarterly reports of sickness absence and turnover which are available on the Management Information Dashboard. This data can provide an indicator of emerging stress hotspots. Where required, the POD Directorate can provide guidance and advice to support the relevant manager(s) to identify the causes and to develop an appropriate action plan. Sometimes, it may be helpful and appropriate to bring together a focus group of employees to explore a particular issue and seek potential solutions.

Where stress appears to be affecting an employee's performance, the employee and their manager should complete a Stress Support Assessment and develop an action plan. In the event of relationship difficulties between the line manager and employee, POD will be able to provide advice and guidance on options available to ensure these difficulties are discussed fully and a plan of action is developed. The involvement of another impartial manager or POD Business Partner in exceptional circumstances may assist the support assessment and action planning process. In addition, and exceptionally, meditation may be an appropriate route to re-establish a good working relationship.

Further Guidance

For Staff:

If you think you or a colleague may be experiencing the effects of stress, we recommend you follow these steps:

- Check in with your colleague to see how they are.
- Raise your concerns about any work-related stress that you may be experiencing with your line manager. Alternatively, approach your trade union representative and / or ask POD for advice and help.
- Talk to your line manager and / or POD in confidence about any other stressors which you feel are / or may affect your ability to conduct your role to the level normally required. If stress is work related complete the [Stress Support Assessment](#)
- and arrange a meeting to discuss this with your line manager (or exceptionally another trusted manager) and agree an action plan of support.
- Accept opportunities for training, counselling or other help when offered or recommended.
- Take stock of your workload and work practice – there may be steps you can take to improve things.

- Contact our confidential Employee Assistance Programme on 0800 028 0199 or on the My Healthy Advantage app for online chat. Qualified counsellors and legal advisors are available 24/7.

For Managers:

If you believe a member of your staff is showing signs of an adverse reaction to stress, we recommend you follow these steps:

- Read this policy carefully.
- Take time to speak to your staff member about your observations; ensure you have time and privacy for this conversation to establish any support arrangements required.
- If work-related factors have been identified complete the stress risk assessment with the staff member and then arrange a meeting with the staff member to discuss and agree an action plan of support; this is particularly important when a staff member returns to work after an absence that is stress related.
- If the problem is personal rather than work-related, consider any actions you could take to support the individual and improve the situation (e.g., short-term changes in work patterns, support through EAP Service).
- Make a note of any actions you agree and make sure you follow these through.
- Seek advice and guidance from your People Business Partner, if required.
- Arrange regular meetings review the assessment and any actions you have agreed.

Section 2: Menopause

This section of the Health and Wellbeing Policy sets out good practice in providing and accessing the right support for menopausal symptoms to assist employees with effectively managing their conditions. It concentrates on the issues affecting all those experiencing menopausal symptoms and sets out a range of support options to assist those both directly and / or indirectly affected.

Definition

Menopause is the time that marks the end of a woman's menstrual cycles. It is diagnosed after 12 months without a menstrual period. It can happen in a person's 40's or 50's, but the typical average is 51 years old in the UK. Experiences of the menopause will differ, and menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40, particularly as a result of medical intervention, such as chemotherapy and surgery.

The menopause is a natural part of life, but the physical and emotional symptoms listed below may disrupt sleep, lower energy and / or affect emotional health.

There are four key stages of the menopause: pre-menopause; perimenopause; menopause and post-menopause.

Further information about these stages, symptoms and side effects can be found on our [Health and Wellbeing Toolkit](#).

Support for those Experiencing Menopause

We recognise that the menopause is a very personal experience and therefore different levels and types of support and adjustments may be needed. We aim to facilitate an open, flexible and understanding working environment to proactively help our colleagues feel safe and supported to talk openly about the menopause. Our guidelines are based on good practice and aim to empower those affected to self-manage their symptoms as much as possible by providing easy access to resources and support. We understand that talking about this personal issue might be difficult for some. Self-help guidance including making healthier lifestyle choices is available, via our [Health and Wellbeing Toolkit](#).

Those wishing to access support might do so through their GP and / or a medical specialist; or through our occupational health service who might have suggested adjustments to consider based on individual circumstances. Those who do not wish to discuss the issue with their direct line manager may find it helpful to have an initial discussion with a trusted colleague, another manager, or their trade unions representative instead. They may also get advice and guidance from the People and Organisational Development Team. Such information will be treated confidentially.

[Good practice](#) in supporting those with menopausal symptoms includes line managers working with individuals to [undertake an assessment](#) to consider certain physical environment factors and job role

requirements to identify any adjustments which would help our colleagues feel comfortable and well supported in managing their symptoms and their work. A 'Menopause Friendly Assessment form' is available to help consider these factors. Individuals should discuss with their manager if they feel that adjustments to their job role or working hours may be necessary.

Our agile working parameters – which include for many roles the ability to occasionally work from home as well as from campus, provide opportunities to achieve a good work and personal life balance. In most cases, this means that those experiencing menopausal symptoms can manage their symptoms without formalising a new working arrangement. Hotdesking arrangements also make it easier for those with menopausal symptoms to find a suitable touch down area to work and access natural light when working on campus. Conversely, if a change to the job or working hours is required, further details are available in the [Reasonable Adjustments](#) section below.

Managers have an important role to play in ensuring that anyone experiencing menopausal symptoms gets the same support and understanding as if they had any other health issue. Further [guidance for managers](#) can be found in the relevant section below.

Menopause Support Network

A menopause support network where employees affected by the menopause directly or indirectly can share knowledge and information, gain peer support, review workplace policies and practice and raise awareness about the menopause is in place. Information on this staff network can be found on the [staff intranet](#).

Support for those Indirectly Affected by the Menopause

It is recognised that those close to those experiencing menopausal symptoms might be indirectly affected. [Our Health and Wellbeing Toolkit – Menopause Section](#) has more information on the menopause to build awareness and also offers different health-related and support opportunities which staff might find useful. This includes access to self-help resources and signposting to services, such as online courses, CBT, occupational health services and relevant health promotion activity.

Good Practice

Assessing needs

To support those in the perimenopause and menopause in the physical work environment, consideration of the following factors might be useful:

- the temperature and ventilation control - would a desk fan be helpful?
- Where applicable, the materials used in our uniforms - does the uniform cause the individual to feel too hot or worsen skin irritation?
- Is there somewhere suitable for the individual to rest?

- Are toilets, showers, and washroom facilities easily available?
- Is cold drinking water easily available?
- Is there access to natural light and an ability to adjust artificial light?
- Are there enough breaks during the working day or is there flexibility to flex working time to increase the number of breaks during the working day?
- Are there any stress factors to address?

Completion of the Menopause Friendly Assessment form should support a discussion around required reasonable adjustments and support, as needed.

Reasonable Adjustments

We have a procedure for managing reasonable adjustments for managing a range of health reasons, with menopause possibly being one.

The Menopause assessment may have already highlighted areas that would be helpful to change or have access to e.g., additional equipment such as a desk fan. However, there may be other factors to consider. Flexibilities that cannot be managed under the agile working principles (or where individuals are denoted as campus only workers) should be dealt with via a Flexible Working request.

It is good practice to allow an individual generally to go to medical appointments, including about menopausal or perimenopausal symptoms and preventative care.

Further information about reasonable adjustments can be found at section 6 below.

Line Managers Guidance

Supporting colleagues through menopause should be approached like any long-term health condition, including making reasonable adjustments. When line managers and individuals collaborate effectively, it reduces workplace impact, boosts morale, retains talent, and minimizes absence.

Good people management is key—spotting early signs of distress and taking action early supports well-being.

Creating an open, flexible, and understanding environment encourages colleagues to seek support without discomfort. This guidance emphasises self-management to empower individuals while clarifying when manager support is needed. The easier it is for colleagues to be open, the more effectively managers can provide the right support.

Absence Recording

The Sickness Absence section of this policy highlights the menopause as a potential long-term fluctuating health condition that should be treated as such, with support and understanding. If symptoms

affect the individual's capacity to work and their attendance, causing a series of short-term absences related to the menopause, these should be recorded through the normal sickness recording process and any adjustments that may be necessary discussed and agreed with the line manager as appropriate. Thereafter, absence will continue to be monitored in accordance with the Sickness Absence Policy.

Section 3: Alcohol, Drug & Substance Misuse

This section of the policy is designed to ensure that employees are aware of support available, expected standards of behaviour, risks associated with alcohol / drug misuse, and the consequences of their actions.

The guidance and procedures provided aim to:

- Clarify the University's position on alcohol, drugs, and substance abuse at work in order to minimise problems at work arising from alcohol, drugs, and substance abuse.
- Help those affected with alcohol, drugs, and substance related problems by encouraging treatment where possible.
- Support staff in dealing with alcohol, drugs, and substance abuse problems by providing a clear procedure.
- Ensure the health and safety of our staff, students, and others at work.

Definition

Alcohol, drugs and substance abuse is defined as "the intermittent or continual use of alcohol or substances which causes detriment to the member of staff's health, social functioning or work performance, and which affects efficiency, productivity, safety, attendance, timekeeping or conduct in the workplace".

Drugs and substances are defined as illegal drugs, prescribed and non-prescribed medication, and solvents. Substances covered in this document are those that come under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Guiding Principles

Discussions and required actions will be applied to members of staff in a fair, sensitive, and confidential manner without discrimination. Information relating to alcohol, drugs and substance abuse should not be divulged to a third party not involved in the process, other than appropriate other such as a GP, Occupational Health, or other health professional, as necessary. Should a more formal approach be required to deal with misuse, a member of staff will be entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague.

Defining Drugs, Alcohol or Substance Abuse

Alcohol, drugs, or substance related issues usually fall into one of two categories:

Conduct related issue: an over-indulgence in alcohol, or misuse of drugs or substances, which results in socially unacceptable or even dangerous behavior. If it is established that a member of staff's misconduct in the form of alcohol, drugs or substance abuse, recourse to the disciplinary procedures may be appropriate.

Ongoing health related issue: where a person's physical or psychological dependency on alcohol, drugs or substances continually or repeatedly interferes with his/her work. This should be seen initially as an ill-health issue and thus treated as such. Employees should be strongly encouraged to seek help and discuss it with their manager, who will keep the discussion in strictest confidence. If employees however do not seek or engage with help and support and their dependency continues to interfere with their conduct at work, or results in socially unacceptable or even dangerous behaviour, recourse to the disciplinary procedure may be appropriate.

Where addiction to alcohol, drugs or substance related issues are not deemed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010, we do recognise that employees may have a physical or mental impairment which is classed as a disability which is caused by or the result of addiction issues. Where this is relevant, we will treat this in line with the Equality Act 2010. Managers should discuss this with employees and agree on options available for help. Support will be provided by People and Organisational Development (POD) team as required.

Intervention

Individuals who know or suspect that they have an alcohol or drug problem are encouraged to seek help voluntarily. Their first contact may be their G.P., or one of the local voluntary services the details of which can be found on the Health and Wellbeing page on the staff intranet. Within the University, help should be sought from the line manager, or a member of the People and Organisational Development team.

Employees are expected to actively seek and engage with any support and assistance, whether provided by their doctor or another specialist service to address an alcohol, drug and / or substance misuse problem. If they fail to undergo treatment or there are repeated incidents of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, may lead to disciplinary action.

If a relapse in the substance misuse problem occurs after counselling or treatment, then the resulting management action will be decided on the merits of the case.

Every effort will be made to ensure that an employee undergoing counselling or treatment for alcohol, drug and/or substance misuse problems is retained in their original job with no prejudice to promotional opportunities or other benefits, provided that work performance and attendance record return to, or remain at, a normally acceptable level.

Consumption Of Alcohol During Work-Related Social Events

It is recognised that alcohol may be available at some university-related events (whether held on the premises or not), such as parties, entertaining visitors, or other work-related events such as training courses. However, employees must be fit for work when conducting duties and are always expected to maintain and be responsible for their own Professional standards of behaviour, with the emphasis on avoiding any actions that could lead to a complaint of misconduct or could harm the reputation of the university. Any such complaints will be fully investigated and may lead to disciplinary action being taken. Non-alcoholic beverages should always be available as an alternative.

Section 4: Eyecare

Protecting eye health is an important part of overall wellbeing at work. The university recognises that prolonged use of **Visual Display Units (VDUs)** may contribute to eye strain, fatigue, and discomfort, impacting both health and productivity.

Under the **Health & Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992**, employers are required to minimise risks associated with **VDU use** by ensuring that workspaces and tasks are well designed. This includes providing appropriate equipment, regular breaks, and guidance on maintaining good eye health. The university's [Display Screen Equipment \(DES\) guidelines](#) set out further details associated with good practice.

To support employees with safe and effective use of VDUs, the university provides an entitlement for eye testing. This section of the policy provides details of entitlements to eye testing and how to claim.

Eye Tests

If you are a VDU user, you are entitled to ask for an eye test paid for by the university, to be carried out by a qualified ophthalmic optician.

Repeat testing is carried out under this policy according to the clinical judgement of the optician.

You can decide which optician you would like to use for your test however you will need to ensure value for money where possible. As a standard, an optician appointment usually costs between £15 - £25. Any appointment that costs more than this would need to be approved in advance by the People & Organisational Development Team.

Recommendation will also be made for a re-examination date. Usually this is approximately every 2 years, but may, of course, vary according to individual need. It will be your responsibility to make arrangements for a retest at the appropriate time.

How To Claim

Your optometrist will state whether glasses are needed and, if so, for what purpose. The University will only pay for basic corrective spectacles that are required for VDU use. No other type of corrective spectacles will be paid for.

If you need spectacles that are for VDU use, we will meet the cost to £55 maximum. If you want more expensive frames, the additional cost will be yours.

You will need to retain a copy of your receipt of payment for your test as well as any relevant prescriptions and submit these through Ebis.

Section 5: Sickness Absence

(Including Short- and Long-Term Absences)

The University recognises the importance of a positive approach to managing sickness absence. This section sets out the principles which may be applied to the management of sickness absence.

Employees have a duty to attend work unless they are unable to do so through sickness or injury, or their absence has been approved. During periods of absences due to sickness, University of Suffolk operates both statutory sick pay and occupational sick pay provisions.

The aims of these guidelines and procedures are to:

- Implement good employment practices which support good levels of resilience in our employees.
- Maintain high levels of attendance.
- Minimise disruption of the education of students and to work colleagues, as a result of employee's absences due to sickness.
- Treat employee absence in a consistent, fair and sensitive manner.
- Provide appropriate advice on the management of general health issues which impact the ability to attend work.

Employee Responsibilities

Notification of Absence

Employees who are unable to come to work due to ill health must inform their Line Manager by telephone as soon as possible on the first day of sickness. This should normally be by their normal starting time but certainly no later than 1 hour after this time. In the absence of the Line Manager, employees are requested to leave a message with a suitably responsible person within their work area, as appropriate (or with their Line Managers' manager). Only in exceptional circumstances will it be appropriate for another person to notify the University of an employee's 's absence. Failure to give timely notification of absence may result in sick pay being withheld.

When informing the Line Manager of their absence, employees are required to give an indication of the reasons for their absence and the length of time they expect to be absent. If it becomes clear that they will be unable to return after the time estimated, they should contact their Line Manager again as soon as possible to update them accordingly. It is reasonable for Line Managers to contact the employee if this information has not been provided or in the event of a concern or query.

When an employee has reported their absence to their Line Manager, it is the Line Manager's responsibility to record the absence using [MyView](#) for pay and monitoring purposes.

It is imperative that, during a period of sickness absence, employees keep their Line Manager (or authorised nominated person) informed regarding their health situation and their intention to return

to work. The absent employee and their Line Manager should agree the frequency and method of contact on the first day of absence. Any conversations should be undertaken with care and sensitivity.

Employees who become ill and begin their sickness absence during a working day, should record the full / half day as appropriate relevant to when their sickness absence from work begins. They should take reasonable steps to ensure their Line Manager (or another responsible manager) is informed of their departure before leaving the workplace or that they are ceasing work due to illness if working off-campus. MyView includes a self-certification section for this purpose.

Employees who are taking annual leave when they become unwell or injured must still tell their Line Manager as soon as is practicable. Employees may be able to reclaim leave providing they have contacted their Line Manager immediately regarding them becoming unwell during their holiday and the reclamation of leave has been agreed. If the period of sickness extends beyond 7 days a fit note must be submitted.

Unauthorised Absences

If an employee fails to report to work without informing their Line Manager, it is important that the matter is investigated with the employee. Contact may need to be made with the recorded next of kin to seek assurance around the wellbeing of the employee. As far as is reasonably practicable, the employee should be encouraged to discuss the absence and be given the opportunity to explain any unreported or unauthorised absence. If after all reasonable efforts have been made to contact the employee, they remain absent without leave, it may be treated as an unauthorised absence without pay and may warrant further formal investigation.

Certification

The University of Suffolk policy with respect to certification is as follows:

Self-Certification

First 7 calendar days of absence	Employees may self-certify their sickness absence for the first 7 calendar days. Self-certification should be confirmed using MyView.
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Doctors Certification (Statement of Fitness)

8 calendar days or longer	Absences which continue to 8 calendar days or longer will be required to be covered by a Statement of Fitness for work certificate. Employees should obtain such a certificate from a relevant medical professional and send it to their Line Manager as soon as possible. The Statement of Fitness will confirm that the employee is either not fit for work or that they may be fit for work taking account of specific advice.
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	If the latter option applies, employees must contact their Line Manager as soon as possible, but in any event before returning to work. The Line Manager, with support by a People Operations / People Business Partner, will determine whether the recommendations are reasonable or practical in the circumstances and, if appropriate, may arrange a referral to Occupational Health for further advice. The University of Suffolk reserves the right to defer a return to work pending an occupational health assessment. The employee's absence on MyView should be closed when staff member returns to record the full period of absence. Statements of Fitness for Work should be uploaded and attached to the absence on MyView without delay to ensure the necessary arrangements to the staff member's sick pay have been made.
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Failure to submit a Statement of Fitness for work certificate to cover any absence from work from the eighth day, coupled with no communication from the employee concerned confirming that their absence shall be continuing will be treated as unauthorised absence (unpaid leave).

If an individual presents themselves fit for work before the medical certificate expires, then an assessment of the risk should be conducted to ensure there is no risk to an earlier return. There is no need for the individual to go back to their GP. If there is a concern over their fitness to return, a further Occupational Health referral to seek a second opinion may be required.

Pay During Sickness

There are two main types of sick pay: statutory sick pay (SSP) and occupational sick pay (OSP)

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

An employer pays this to an employee who is away from work because they are sick. SSP is a Social Security benefit paid by employers. It is not the same as occupational sick pay from University of Suffolk (which is described below). SSP is normally paid for a maximum of 28 weeks.

Nearly all employees are covered by SSP if they are sick. People who do not get SSP include those who:

- Are sick within specified periods of a previous claim for certain state benefits (e.g., sickness benefit, Employment and Support Allowance, maternity allowance etc.);
- Have done no work under the contract of employment;
- Do not work due to stoppage of work associated to a trade dispute;
- Are sick due to a pregnancy related illness starting or continuing in the 4th week before the expected week of childbirth;

- Are sick whilst abroad outside the European Union (EU). You can get it if you are in the EU;
- Are in legal custody.

If you are not entitled to SSP or you have received your full entitlement to SSP POD will send you form SSP1 which you send to the DWP to claim Employment and Support Allowance. This applies after you have been absent from work for more than 28 weeks within a specified period or earlier if you have no entitlement to SSP.

Occupational Sick Pay

If you are absent from work due to sickness, we will continue to pay you in accordance with the Occupational Sick Pay Scheme providing you are complying with the requirements outlined in this policy. The length of time that you receive pay, and the amount of pay you receive, will depend upon your length of service.

During the first year of service	1 month's full pay and, after 4 months' service, 2 months half pay
During the second year of service	2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay
During the third year of service	4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay
During the fourth and fifth years of service	5 months' full pay and 5 months' half pay
After five years' service	6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay

Occupational sick pay is calculated on a rolling 12-month basis and is linked to the employee's length of service. When a new period of sickness absence begins, the entitlement is assessed by looking back over the previous 12 months to determine how much sick leave has already been taken. If an employee remains on continuous sickness absence and passes into a new service year during that absence, the additional entitlement associated with the next service milestone will not apply until they have returned to work and a new period of sickness begins.

If you are entitled to receive SSP, or you are in receipt of any other allowances or benefits, these will be offset against any occupational provision to full pay.

Where an employee is entitled to receive half pay, the total sum of half pay plus SSP, if appropriate, and any other benefits or allowances, must not exceed full pay. If necessary, the half pay allowance will be reduced.

If a public holiday occurs during a period of sick leave, the member of staff will continue to receive occupational sick pay as applicable. However, no payment will be made for a public holiday which occurs during a period of unpaid sick leave.

In determining your normal pay for the purposes of this scheme, Payroll will include any regular paid overtime which is an express, contractual requirement of your terms of employment.

Entitlement to paid sick leave for a term-time only employee applies only during periods when the employee would normally be at work.

Exceptional provisions apply to any employee who is injured as a result of a crime of violence in the course of their work for the University.

Where a period of absence is due to injury sustained by the member of staff in the actual discharge of their duties, and which is not attributable to any fault of their own, normal sick pay arrangements will apply

Staff whose attendance at work is being formally monitored in accordance with this policy may be required to submit Statement of Fitness for any sickness absences, regardless of duration, during the monitoring period. Employees should note that they may be charged by their Medical Practice for such a certificate. People & Organisational Development will inform employees in writing that this is a requirement as part of the formal monitoring process, see Stage 2 of the Framework for further details. Failure to submit a doctor's certificate to cover any absences, as required, will mean that the staff member will only receive SSP (if eligible) for the relevant period.

Management Responsibilities

Line Managers have a duty to ensure safe working conditions and not to expose employees to reasonably foreseeable risks of injury (including psychological injury).

Maintain Contact with Absent Employees

Line Managers should maintain regular contact with employees who are absent due to ill health. The purpose of maintaining contact is a supportive approach to focus on the individual's health and well-being, planning their return to work and agreeing any support arrangements as and when appropriate.

The frequency of the contact will depend on individual circumstances. Contact should be by telephone unless reasonable adjustments are required. Home visits can be arranged exceptionally where practical in agreement with the employee. It is important to create a climate of trust by being sensitive to the needs of individuals and agreeing beforehand the method, frequency, and reasons for keeping in contact (a 'keeping in touch plan'). Employees should also be asked if they would like to receive news, information, or briefings available to other colleagues to help them feel connected with the University during their absence. This is optional and a supportive measure for the employee. If an employee requests that there should be no contact at all during sickness, the reason for this

should be explored with them. It is not reasonable for any absent employees to expect indefinite no contact from a representative of the university whilst they are absent. Exceptionally, a 'neutral' point of contact may be agreed for contact purposes.

Updating MyView with All Sickness Absences

Line Managers must ensure that MyView is updated with the details of the absence, preferably on the first day of absence but no later than 3 days after the start of the absence. As a result, the employee will receive an automated email confirming the absence has been recorded. In the case of ongoing absence, Line Managers must upload and attach a Statement of Fitness to the absence and extending the absence date on MyView, as they are received. Full guidance on recording absence on MyView can be found on [the staff intranet](#).

Managing and Monitoring Sickness Absence Levels and Patterns

Sickness absence data is available to all Line Managers on the Employees Information Dashboard. Line Managers should use this data to identify employees who have reached the absence trigger levels or patterns of absence which may be unacceptable and require further investigation with the support of their People Operations / People Business Partner.

When trigger levels for either long-term or short-term absences are reached, the relevant framework outlined below will be applied. However, if attendance levels remain unacceptable, or where a return to work from long term absence cannot be facilitated in a reasonable timeframe or with the support of reasonable adjustments (as required), the University reserves the right to consider ongoing employment which ultimately may result in dismissal.

Short Term Absence Trigger Levels

University of Suffolk has identified frequent absence triggers that will prompt action. These triggers are as follows:

Absences equating to 10 days or more in a rolling 12-month period (pro rata for part time and non-standard working employees – see below); or

3 occasions in a 6-month period or 4 occasions in a rolling 12-month period; or

A pattern of absence judged unacceptable by management (e.g., frequent Friday or Monday absences or when certain work activities are taking place).

Part time employees and those working non-standard patterns (i.e., compressed working of full time in 4 days) shall have the triggers in this policy adjusted to their contracted working pattern which will be based on the number of days in the week they usually work:

Days worked per week	Days absence in rolling 12-month period
1	2
2	4
3	6
4	8
5	10

The trigger points should be used as a guide as individual circumstances should be considered. Line Managers will already be aware of the levels of absence in their teams and have discretion to act before triggers are reached if appropriate, e.g. when absences are consistently just below the trigger points. Equally, hitting a trigger will not always require action e.g. when an individual has been signed-off work following surgery or has a temporary condition which may lead to spells of absence in the short-term. Consideration should also be given over whether to suspend or extend a trigger point as a reasonable adjustment in the event of the individual's sickness absence being due to disability or maternity status.

Where short term triggers have been reached these will be managed by following these guidelines:

Stage 1 – Informal Meeting

Employees who have met the trigger levels will be invited to an informal meeting to discuss their absences by their Line Manager as soon as possible after their return-to-work interview (no longer than 5 working days). A template invite letter can be found on [Managers Hub](#).

This meeting will be used to:

- Explain to the employee that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss their attendance in the past 6/12 months.
- Make clear to the employee that the aim of this meeting is to find ways to support them to improve their attendance.
- Understand any underlying reasons for the employee's absences.
- Establish any reasonable adjustments that could contribute to the employee's on-going attendance.
- Signpost the employee to support for example the Employee Assistance Programme.
- Review and update any support assessments that have been previously completed.
- Set a target for improved attendance over a review period (usually 3-6 months).
- Make the employee aware that if they do not meet this target, they could progress to a formal meeting to discuss further as per Stage 2 below.
- Conversations should be conducted with care and sensitivity.

Representation – a meeting of this kind is part of day-to-day management. There is no formal entitlement to representation at such a meeting.

There may be some circumstances where an employee may not move to a Stage 2 Formal Meeting. Line managers should consult with their People Operations / People Business Partner to discuss and confirm options.

Stage 2 - Formal Meeting

If, at the review stage (or before if high absence levels occur before this), an employee's level of absence continues at an unacceptable level, the line manager will hold a meeting to discuss this with the employee. The line manager will notify the employee of the purpose of the meeting together with the date, time and venue. The employee must also be advised that they may be accompanied by a work colleague employed by the University or a Trade Union representative only. The employee will also be informed that a formal written warning may be issued. This warning letter shall specify the duration of the warning (usually 12 months).

If it is decided by the line manager, that a warning is to be issued, attendance levels will continue to be monitored during the period of the warning. At the end of the warning period, and during this period if appropriate, the manager will meet with the employee to review attendance levels. The employee should demonstrate that they are taking proactive steps to maintain their fitness for work.

Employees subject to this process may be required to submit Statement for Fitness for work certificates for any sickness absences, regardless of duration, during the warning period. Employees should note that they may be charged by their Medical Practice for the production of such a certificate. POD will inform staff within the formal warning letter of this requirement. Failure to submit the above-mentioned certificate to cover any absences, as required, will mean that the employee will only receive SSP for the relevant period.

In the event of a satisfactory level of attendance having been achieved and maintained, this will be confirmed to the employee in writing. Where an acceptable level of attendance has not been reached and sustained (i.e., trigger levels are again breached during the review / warning 'live' period), a further formal written warning may be issued, or the matter may progress to Stage 3 of these procedures. It is not necessary to await the end of the review/warning period to move an individual through the process, where attendance is still frequent and unacceptable in duration (i.e., where triggers are again breached or concerns about attendance remain).

Managers should seek advice from their People Business Partner before any formal warnings are given.

A summary of the meeting and a warning letter will be sent to the employee by the line manager. Employees do have a right to appeal against warnings and appeals should be made in writing to their line manager within 5 working days of the date of the warning letter so this should also be included in the letter.

Stage 3 - Dismissal

In the event of a continuing unacceptable attendance level, the employee concerned may be dismissed with notice. No dismissal should take place without discussing the case history with an appropriate member of the People & OD Team (Head of Business Partnering and People Operations or more senior member of staff).

If a manager is contemplating a dismissal in these circumstances, the following arrangements should be observed:

Write to the employee to invite them to attend a meeting about their attendance level, indicating that dismissal with notice is a possible outcome. A member of the POD Department shall attend the meeting to assist the manager. Inform the employee they are entitled to be accompanied at that meeting by a trade union representative or work colleague.

It may be appropriate for occupational advice to be sought (where possible), including advice from an OH Physician (if not already available) in advance of the meeting. If the individual is non-compliant in attending Occupational Health, the final meeting will proceed and will consider all known information at that time. It is not reasonable to prolong the final review process where an individual is obstructive or non-compliant with their requirements under this process.

At the meeting review attendance levels and actions taken to date.

The manager may ask the employee to withdraw to allow time to reflect on the discussion and to decide the way forward.

If dismissal is the outcome, a letter confirming the arrangements will be issued by the line manager. Such a letter will notify the employee of their appeal rights.

Stage 4 - Appeal

Employees dismissed in such circumstances shall have a right of appeal. Appeals should be made in writing to the dismissing manager within 5 working days. Such appeals will be heard in line with the University's Appeal process following Dismissal.

Long Term Absence Trigger Level

If an employee is unfit to work for 4 working weeks (20 days for full time employees, pro rata for part time employees), the absence will be managed as a long-term absence.

Referral to Occupational Health

If an employee is absent from work for 4 working weeks (20 days for full time employees, pro rata for part time employees) or more, or in the event of frequent absences, the University of Suffolk may seek to refer the employee to occupational health and may seek to refer earlier any employees who are absent with mental health related conditions to support recovery. Further details of the

University's current occupational health provider may be obtained by the People and Organisational Development department. The occupational health service is provided by professionals who are suitably qualified in occupational health practices/ nursing / therapy or medicine.

A referral to occupational health may be made for one or more of the following reasons:

- To understand the nature of the absence, likely prognosis and to establish the likely duration of the absence.
- To obtain advice following diagnosis of a short- or long-term condition.
- To identify what, if any, adjustments we might need to consider making in order to facilitate an early return to work, which may include redeployment.
- To assist us in planning a phased return to work.
- To provide information for occupational pension purposes, in the event that ill-health retirement is the appropriate way forward.

Referrals to occupational health are made by the relevant People Operations / People Business Partner in conjunction with the line manager and member of staff and the Occupational Health Advisor will give their opinions and recommendations in a report to the People Operations/People Business Partner. This report will be shared with the employee concerned. Reports will also usually be shared with the Line Manager.

Following receipt of this report, Line Managers are encouraged to meet with the employee to discuss the report and agree any support arrangements, as appropriate, to assist a return to work or alternative pathway.

The Occupational Health Advisor may seek an employee's consent to approach their GP for access to medical records in order to better understand an employee's state of health and develop advice for the employer. Details of medical records will not be shared with the University unless that is with the express consent of the individual.

The University reserves the right to request that an employee attends a medical examination (including occupational health). In the event of an individual refusing to attend an appointment, management may be obliged to make decisions about future employment based on the information available to them.

In some cases, a case conference involving the employee, Line Manager, People Operations/People Business Partner, and the Occupational Health Advisor may be appropriate. The employee may be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a work colleague if they wish.

Phased Return to Work

To assist some employees returning to work after a long-term sickness absence, a phased return could be considered as a reasonable adjustment. A phased return would usually only be considered for employees who have an absence lasting more than 40 days/8 working weeks but is not suitable for all situations. There may be occasions where a phased return would be recommended for a

lesser period of sickness and Line Managers should consult with their People Operations Partner / People Business Partner agreeing to accommodate a phased return.

A phased return is a temporary change in an employee's working hours where they will gradually build back up to their contracted working hours over a period of no more than 4 weeks. There is no requirement for every phased return to total four weeks – in some situations a shorter phased return may be perfectly suitable. During a phased return to work, the employee will be paid at their normal rate of pay for the hours that they work, and will be regarded as being on sickness absence for the contracted hours that are **not worked** under the phased return (paid occupational and statutory sick pay for these hours, in line with outstanding entitlements at the date of the phased return). Employees may instead request to use any untaken accrued annual leave entitlement for the hours they will not work to top up pay and instead of the unworked hours being processed as sickness absence.

In cases where all entitlements outlined above have been exhausted, hours not worked under a phased return may be processed as unpaid sick leave, or a temporary reduction in hours may be made (unpaid leave and part time work may affect pension contributions and employees should refer to their pension provider for more details about this).

In exceptional circumstances, extended arrangements may be supported where employees can use accrued holiday or unpaid leave, if applicable, to accommodate a longer reintroduction to work plan. Consideration should also be made to a temporary reduction in hours (pay adjustments would apply), permanent change to contracted working hours, or work pattern. Other possibilities may include agreement to reasonable periods of unpaid leave to support an employee's recovery. Line Managers should record the details of the agreed phased return using the Phased Return Plan Form on MyView.

The Line Manager and People Operations Partner / People Business Partner will take into consideration the recommendations of Occupational Health alongside operational and business needs. This will then be discussed and communicated to the employee. The Line Manager will meet regularly with the employee to understand how the phased return is going and document this by email to the employee. If the phased return is not proving effective, another referral to Occupational Health may be recommended.

If an employee is not likely to become fit for their present employment, the University will work with them to explore opportunities for redeployment in another area of work. This may mean a reduction in salary, and this will be discussed fully before any action is taken.

Redeployment

In some cases, employees on long term sick leave may determine that they are not well enough to return to their current role but potentially could take on a different role. This will usually be determined in the occupational health report.

In circumstances where the employee cannot return to their substantive role, as far as is reasonably practicable, the University will seek to work with the individual to identify any potential employment for the employee through the vacancies available or pending at that time. It will be important to

understand the breadth of knowledge, skills, and experience to determine which type of role may be suitable and to ascertain if the individual may meet the essential criteria. This will be undertaken where possible, prior to wider advertisement of the post – alongside any other internal candidates who may qualify for prior access (i.e., staff ‘at risk’ of redundancy.) If the role has already been advertised, the employee will be guaranteed an interview should they meet the essential criteria for the role, but an application will still need to be made. If the employee is successful, salary protection will not apply (in the case that the role is at a lower grade) and the employee will be appointed to the normal terms and conditions of the post. While the employee is free to refuse any offer of redeployment, the only alternative will usually be dismissal. If there is no alternative role available and suitable for the employee, there may be no other option but to dismiss.

An employee who accepts an offer of alternative employment will be given a minimum trial period of four weeks [or such longer period as may be agreed by the University to give them an opportunity to assess the suitability]. A development plan will be agreed with the employee to assist with the induction to the new role.

Ill Health Retirement

In some cases, employees on long term sick leave may not be fit to return to work and may be eligible for ill health retirement. Ill health retirement is where an employee can withdraw their pension early if they are no longer fit to work. This will need to be determined in an occupational health report in order to start the process.

Ill health retirement is available through both LGPS and USS pension schemes. The employee must have been a member of the pension scheme for at least 2 years to qualify. Eligibility can differ between the pension schemes so it is advised that a line manager or employee liaises with their People Business Partner who will assist with the process of applying for ill health retirement.

Termination of Employment on Grounds of Ill Health

There are occasions where an employee will not become well enough to return to work within a reasonable timescale and, in these circumstances, their employment may be terminated (with notice). No dismissal should take place without discussing the case history with an appropriate member of the People & OD Team (Head of Business Partnering and People Operations or more senior member of staff). A People Business Partner shall assist line managers in conducting any such procedures.

If a line manager is contemplating a dismissal (termination of employment) in these circumstances, the following arrangements must be observed:

Write to the employee to invite them to attend a meeting about their attendance level, indicating that dismissal with notice is a possible outcome. A member of the POD Department shall attend the meeting to assist the line manager. Inform the employee they are entitled to be accompanied at that meeting by a Trade Union representative or work colleague.

Usually, occupational advice (as available) should be referred to.,

At the meeting review attendance levels, fitness to work and actions taken to date.

The line manager may ask the employee to withdraw while allowing time to reflect on the discussion and to decide the way forward.

If dismissal is the outcome, a letter confirming the arrangements will be issued by the line manager. Such a letter will notify the employee of their appeal rights.

In such circumstances, the employee may be entitled to receive enhanced pension benefits, in accordance with the provisions of the relevant pension scheme. These will be explained to the staff member. The relevant pension scheme guides contain further information, and these can be obtained from the relevant pension scheme website.

Employees dismissed (termination of employment) in such circumstances shall have a right of appeal. Appeals should be made in writing to the Director of People & Organisational Development within 5 calendar days. Such appeals will be heard by three senior staff of the University.

Return to Work following any period of sickness absence

The Line Manager will conduct an informal return to work meeting as soon as reasonably possible after an employee returns to work after every occasion of absence. Usually this should occur on the day the employee returns to work. This is important and beneficial to ensure the employee is well supported upon their return. Any concerns raised should be discussed with your People Operations / People Business Partner for advice.

Following a long-term absence (20+ days) line managers may undertake a more in-depth discussion with the employee. On these occasions, a People Business Partner may also attend, particularly where Occupational Health services have been used to seek advice and guidance to support the employee's return to work.

A return to work meeting provides an opportunity to welcome employees back, confirm their readiness to resume duties, and ensure sickness records are accurate (if a trigger level has been reached, managers should advise the employee that they will be invited to attend to further meeting to discuss). It creates space to address health or workplace concerns, discuss potential adjustments or support needed for a smooth return, and identify any further actions, such as occupational health referrals or access to additional resources. The meeting also allows for open dialogue about any issues related to attendance or wellbeing, enabling collaborative solutions and proactive support tailored to the employee's needs. Conversations should be conducted with care and sensitivity.

An accurate record of the meeting should be made and shared with the employee. A return to Work form can be found on MyView to record the meeting which is available to both the Line Manager and employee.

Representation – a meeting of this kind is part of day-to-day management. There is no formal entitlement to representation at such a meeting.

Closing a Sickness Absence Record

When an employee returns to work, the Line Manager must close the absence record on MyView confirming their date of return alongside completing the Return to Work form.

As mentioned above, full guidance on using MyView can be found [here](#).

Line Managers may ask their People Operations/People Business Partner for advice if they are uncertain about an employee's fitness for work.

Individual Risk Assessments

Line Managers are responsible to ensure an appropriate risk assessment is conducted with their employees to identify support arrangements including reasonable adjustments to their job or work environment and arrangements on a temporary or permanent basis to support them particularly with certain health issues, this might include: -

- i) Pregnancy related – refer to Maternity Leave Policy.
- ii) Disability - refer to Personal Emergency Evacuation Procedures.
- iii) Musculoskeletal - refer to Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Policy.
- iv) Stress related – refer to Resilience and Stress Management Policy.

Reasonable Adjustments

In the event of a request for a reasonable adjustment from an employee or as recommended through occupational health or other specialist, Line Managers should consider the adjustment seriously and accommodate unless there is a genuine reason why this is not possible, in discussion with a People Operations / People Business Partner. This might be due to cost implications and the availability of resources (finance, equipment, and people). Adjustments to support employees in the workplace can encompass various aspects, such as working arrangements, premises, or job responsibilities. Advice and guidance is available from the People Operations / People Business Partners to support the consideration and implementation of any adjustments requested or recommended.

Adjustments may be on a temporary or permanent basis and line managers may wish to record adjustments agreed using the 'Reasonable Adjustments Agreement' which is available on the Hub. Where adjustments are in place on an ongoing basis to support an employee's long-term condition, it may be reasonable for occupational health to undertake an annual appraisal of the employee's wellbeing and the adjustments in place to continually support that employee.

Where funds for adjustments are available externally, University of Suffolk will expect employees seeking these adjustments to participate fully in accessing such funds.

Further information on reasonable adjustments can be found in Section 6 below.

Disability Leave

As part of our commitment to provide reasonable adjustments to employees who have declared themselves disabled (as defined by the Equality Act 2010), we offer up to 10 days' disability leave per academic year (pro rata for part time working) which may be taken for reasons related to their disability in place of uncertified sick leave. Disability leave may be used on a planned basis (for rest, rehabilitation, specialist appointments or other purposes related to the employee's disability) or on an unplanned basis. Employees declaring a disability may be referred to our Occupational Health provider for advice and guidance regarding appropriate adjustments that might be made to the workplace and/or job to support them.

For all instances of disability leave, employees must complete the online notification process in the same way as for sickness absence as outlined above but indicating that it is disability leave where prompted.

Disability leave shall not be recorded against sickness absence and will not count against entitlement to occupational sick pay. However, disability leave will be reviewed in accordance with normal monitoring procedures. Employees taking unplanned disability leave must notify their Line Manager of their absence in the same way as they would for an uncertified sickness absence.

The University of Suffolk is committed to supporting people with disabilities to remain at work. University management will work with employees to identify reasonable adjustments that may be made to the workplace or to the job in order to achieve this aim. To this end, we may seek professional advice from other agencies or occupational health. Employees may also engage with Access to work for further advice and support.

Industrial Injury

If you have an injury during work time or you have contracted certain types of disease through work, you may be entitled to Industrial Injury Benefit. This is paid on top of benefits and pay.

If you have an accident while you are working, you must complete an [accident report form](#), available from your place of work.

In the event of a long-term sickness absence leading to dismissal, the University of Suffolk reserves the right to cease employment prior to the occupational sick pay allowance being exhausted.

Pension Contributions During Sickness Absence

For employees with membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), benefits will continue to accrue during sickness absences as if the individual were working normally on full pay (even during periods of nil pay entitlement). If employees are on unpaid sick leave, they will not pay any contributions, but continue to accrue benefits.

For employees in the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), the University of Suffolk will maintain full employer's and the balance of employee's superannuation contributions during any period when an employee receives sick pay less than their full pay. However, employees are able to accrue benefits if they make up the employee and employer contributions for the full period of unpaid sick leave.

Employees are advised to check their pension scheme rules for further information about absence and the effects on pension contributions/entitlements.

Taking Holiday During Sickness Absences

During periods of sickness absence, employees are able to take holiday to assist their recovery. This may be recommended by a medical practitioner. Bookings for leave should be made using MyView annual leave system in accordance with existing arrangements.

Accrual of Leave During Long Term Absence

Unless otherwise specified, annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue during periods of sickness absence paid or unpaid. In these circumstances, if the accrued outstanding leave cannot be taken within the normal annual leave period a maximum of up to 4 weeks leave can be carried forward, to be taken within 18 months starting from the end of the leave year in which the leave has accrued. (e.g., annual leave accrued during the annual leave year 2023/24, up to a maximum of 4 weeks may be carried forward to be taken by 31 January 2026).

People with Additional Needs

We recognise that not all impairments and difficulties employees may encounter are classed as a disability under the Equality Act and that employees may require additional support to assist them with a temporary or longer-term health issue.

Employees are encouraged to approach their Line Manager about any support they may require to assist them. Advice and guidance is available from your People Operations / People Business Partner, if required.

Absences Due to Injuries Caused by Accidents

If you are absent through injuries caused by the actionable negligence of a third party in respect of which damages may be recoverable, you must inform your Line Manager as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so. Any payment that may be made by the University for all or part of any such absence (other than statutory sick pay) shall be by way of a loan (notwithstanding that as an interim measure income tax has been deducted from any payments as if they were emoluments of employment) that must be repaid in full. If damages are settled on a proportionate basis, the University will

require full details. The amount of any repayment to the organisation required in those circumstances will be determined by the organisation but will not exceed the actual damages recovered or the part thereof identified as loss of earnings.

In circumstances where no claim is made or where no claim can be made, you may, at the University's discretion, be paid up to your maximum sick pay entitlement.

Where such an advance is refunded in full, the absence will not count in aggregating periods of sickness absence but will remain on file for reasons of fact.

Section 6: Adjustments at Work

This section of the policy gives information on adjustments that may be required in the workplace to remove or reduce disadvantage due to a health condition or disability.

Examples of adjustments are:

- Making changes to the workplace.
- Changing someone's working arrangements.
- Finding a different way to do something.
- Providing equipment, services, or support.
- Changes to working patterns.

Adjustments are specific to an individual person and cover any area of work. It is for the employer to determine the reasonableness of the request and if this can be accommodated.

Requirement to consider adjustments

The law (Equality Act 2010) states that employers must make reasonable adjustments when:

- They know, or could reasonably be expected to know, someone is disabled.
- A disabled staff member or job applicant asks for adjustments.
- Someone who is disabled is having difficulty with any part of their job.
- Someone's absence record, sickness record or delay in returning to work is because of, or linked to, their disability.
- To assist an employee returning from a long-term period of absence

Reasonable Adjustments

- It is important to discuss the request or requirement with the individual. The employer must determine the reasonableness of the request considering if the adjustment: Will remove or reduce the disadvantage.
- Is practical to make.
- Is affordable (based on financial and resource capability)
- Could harm the health and safety of others.

Adjustments required to the working environment (e.g., equipment or desk situation) would be made to the campus environment and not to the home (where the individual is an agile worker).

There may be occasions where the request is not deemed reasonable and therefore discussion must be had around what is reasonable, and adjustments either redefined or scaled back or exceptionally, not supported.

Requestors

A request for reasonable adjustments will usually originate as a result of an Occupational Health assessment. However, there may be occasions where an individual's GP or another medical specialist involved in their care may make adjustment suggestions. The individual may also request adjustments, or it may be realized through discussions with the line manager or People Business

Partner, that there are adjustments that may support the individual which are deemed to be viable or reasonable. The procedure for managing requests (including making purchases for required equipment) can be found in the [Health and Wellbeing Toolkit](#)