Absence Management Guidance – Line Manager

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Action	Supporting information
Familiarise yourself with the Policy	This guidance must be read in conjunction with the Absence Management Policy.
Dealing with **requests from employees for time off** for medical appointments	Employees must try to arrange appointments outside of work time. However as this is not always possible, you may receive requests for time off to attend medical appointments. You must make every effort to approve a request for time off to attend a medical appointment (this can include seeing a GP, Dentist, Optometrist, Specialist, Consultant etc.). You must carefully consider each request, taking into account aspects such as the reason for the request, the benefit to the employee in attending the appointment (if known), team workload, staff cover etc. **Always look for a way to accommodate a request as your default position**, and only in extreme circumstances should you ask the employee to seek an alternative appointment time. **Time off to attend medical appointments may be recorded in People & Money as 'Personal Health & Welfare Appointments' under the 'Other Paid Leave' option. See P&M User Guide here.**
Dealing with **requests for time off** for medical appointments from employees with **disabilities or underlying health conditions**	If an employee has a disability or underlying health condition which requires regular or ongoing appointments, you should discuss this in detail with the employee so that you understand the background and requirement for the appointments. Note: the duty to make reasonable adjustments places the responsibility on us as the employer, rather than the disabled employee. Therefore, it's important you give careful and thorough consideration to each request you receive. Please refer to the Reasonable Adjustments Policy for further information. **It is expected that it will be reasonable to make the necessary arrangements/adjustments to accommodate a request to attend medical appointments** but you may wish to seek advice from the HR Advisory Service via the HR Helpline and/or Occupational Health Service (OHS) for more information before confirming the outcome of the request. Things to consider will include (but aren't limited to): • the frequency of appointments • how much time off is required to attend them • how long they are expected to be required i.e. is it a short-term need or longer term, ongoing requirement? • the impact the time off will have on the employee's colleague's workload and what you can do to reorganise/reallocate work • the impact the time off will have on the employee's ability to perform their role (taking into account any reasonable adjustments you can accommodate to their duties and/or expected outputs) • whether any other support can be provided (e.g. provision of equipment at work to reduce the impact of the disability, temporary change to working pattern/hours etc.)

	Document a record of any adjustments you have agreed with the employee and send it to the HR Helpline so it can be uploaded to the employee's digital file. You can use the Implementing Adjustments Form to do this.
Reporting and recording absences	Make sure your team members are aware of who to contact if they are unable to attend work due to illness or injury. This may be you or a designated person in your school/department. Guidance on how to input absences can be found in 'My Knowledge' in People & Money. Or see P&M User Guide here. Record all absences of **at least half the employee's working day or more** in People & Money, ensuring accuracy of dates and the reason(s) given for the absence from work. Note: People & Money requires absences to be recorded in half days or full days. Absences may be recorded in the system without an end/return date if you're unsure how long someone might be off. You must then add the absence end date to the employee's absence record in People & Money when the employee returns to work.
Contact during an employee's absence	If an employee advises they will be off for more than a few days, you should make appropriate arrangements in a timely manner for how and when you'll keep in touch during their absence. This should be agreed through discussion with the employee and take account of the nature of their illness/injury and likely duration of their absence. The method of contact with the employee may be in person, by telephone, email, online calls e.g. via MS Teams or a combination. The frequency of contact will depend on the individual circumstances and the duration of absence. Arrangements should be mutually agreed. There is no one-size-fits-all approach and any arrangements made may need to be reviewed if circumstances change or the absence continues for a prolonged period. The purpose of maintaining regular contact is to keep in touch, offer and provide support, ensure the employee does not become isolated, get updates on their condition and any treatment they are receiving, and, in time, to help you properly manage their return to work/rehabilitation process. Contact should be sensitive and non-intrusive, ensuring the employee feels supported and valued.
Handling Fit Notes	Employees must submit fit notes (or hospital documentation) for any absences lasting over one week i.e. **from the eighth calendar day of absence**. They should submit these to you, or a designated school/department contact, by posting the original or scanning or taking a photo of their fit note and emailing it. You should contact the employee if you haven't received a fit note when it is due, or if one has 'run out'/expired and a further fit note has not been received.

	Where more than one fit note is required, i.e. due to the ongoing nature of an absence, the dates on the fit notes must run consecutively with no interruption in the dates covered. If there is a gap, say due to the availability of a GP appointment, you should ask the employee to ask their health professional e.g. doctor, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, nurse or pharmacist, for a fit note to cover the full period of absence. On receipt, the fit note must be uploaded to the employee's absence record in People & Money by you or the designated school/department contact. See P&M User Guide here. If you received the original hard copy, once it has been scanned and uploaded, you must return the original to the employee.

Preparing for a return to work (RTW) discussion	It is important to make sure you attend the return-to-work meeting properly prepared and with the information you will need to enable an informed and productive discussion. Your preparation will vary depending on the circumstances but will usually include the following:
	• a review of the employee's absence record, noting:
	  ○ number of spells of absence in the previous 6 months,
	  ○ number of days absent in the previous 12 months,
	  ○ the reasons given for the absences and any patterns (e.g. regular days of the week/month)
	• a review of any fit notes supplied by the employee – both for their latest and any earlier periods of absence.
	Make sure you note if their health professional has made any recommendations regarding their return to work, for example on a phased basis or with other adjustments in place to ease and sustain their return to work.
	• checking that any previously agreed actions have been carried out
	• checking if a review point for consideration of formal attendance management has been reached (or may shortly be reached) in line with the Absence Management Policy, section 8.
	
	Make sure you know how you are going to record the points discussed at the meeting. For any "in-depth RTW discussions", email a Return To Work Form to the employee so that they can complete Section 1 of the form in advance of the meeting. You can then complete the rest of the form together during the discussion. A record of what is discussed will be important to ensure that the employee is clear on the situation, including the possible consequences of further absences, and to demonstrate fair management.

Return to work discussions for **very short absences**	You should **check in** with all employees when they return to work, regardless of the duration of or reason for their absence. For absences lasting **less than four calendar days**, this should be an informal catch up, ideally on the day they return to work, or as soon as possible afterwards.

	You may not work in the same location as your employee and therefore a 'phone call may be sufficient in ensuring the employee feels supported and valued. Alternatively, you may need/wish to chat online via Microsoft Teams, for example. If so, see final section below on 'Setting up and hosting meetings and hearings remotely' for more information. Irrespective of how you undertake the check in, you must make sure it is held in private and where you can't be overheard and won't be disturbed/ interrupted. The aim of this conversation is primarily to make sure the employee is well enough to be back at work and to update them on anything they may have missed while they were off. You should give the employee an opportunity to raise anything else they'd like to discuss. Bear in mind their absence may have been due to, for example, a newly diagnosed condition. It could have been due to a personal or professional difficulty which you are currently unaware of. Some examples of this might be: • an inability to cope with their current workload due, for example, to pressures at home • a poor working relationship with a colleague • a breakdown in childcare or other care arrangements. If new or previously unknown issues are brought to your attention, you should consider what support or action may be necessary to help resolve them.
Inviting the employee to the RTW check-in or in-depth discussion, and their **right to be accompanied**	You do not need to formally invite the employee to this meeting, a verbal invitation or electronic calendar invite is sufficient. The invite should clearly state the purpose of the meeting – a template is available from the HR Helpline. If sending an electronic calendar invite, you must ensure you mark it as 'private' so that others who have access to the employee's calendar, cannot view the nature/title of the meeting. The employee does not have a statutory 'right' to be accompanied to a RTW discussion, whether it is an informal check-in or more in-depth discussion. However, should this be requested, you should give careful consideration to whether it is reasonable to accommodate this request or not. Contact the HR Advisory Service via the HR Helpline for advice.
Return to work discussions for absences of **4+ calendar days**	For absences which have lasted **four calendar days or more**, or in cases where you feel a more in-depth discussion is necessary (e.g. they are nearing a review point or you notice a pattern in their absences which you'd like to discuss further), you should hold an **in-depth return to work discussion** with the employee (see section 7 of the Absence Management Policy). This must be recorded on a RTW form. See above re: **inviting the employee** and details about their **right to be accompanied** to a RTW discussion.

	Book a suitable room for the return to work discussion, where you will have privacy and won't be interrupted or disturbed. Alternatively, you may need/wish to hold the meeting remotely, online via Microsoft Teams, for example. If so, see final section below on 'Setting up and hosting meetings and hearings remotely' for more information. Use the RTW discussion to find out more about the employee's absence, whether they've seen a doctor or other health professional, how they are feeling now, any advice or medication they have received and to discuss and agree if any additional support is required, or whether a Management Referral to OHS might help. The RTW discussion should be a two-way conversation. You should avoid asking closed questions (where the answers can be confined to 'yes' or 'no') so that the employee is encouraged to be open with you and to share information which will help you gain a better understanding of the situation and determine what might be done to support them. Note any outcomes on the RTW form and provide a copy to the employee and upload the completed form to the employee's absence record on People & Money, either yourself, or by a designated school/department contact. See P&M User Guide here. Follow up where necessary e.g. if you've agreed that more information is required from the Occupational Health Service (OHS), complete a Management Referral, informing the employee of its purpose and content before submitting it to OHS. If you have concerns about an employee's level or pattern of absence, you must flag your concerns to them at this stage. Ensure you make them aware of the implications of any further absences i.e. without any mitigating circumstances, if the absences continue or attendance deteriorates further, it may be necessary to invite them to a Formal Attendance Review.
Return to work discussion **outcomes**	If the employee cites work related issues as having contributed to their absence, you must look to explore these further and do so outside of the meeting. You need to try to resolve these issues, where possible, before considering next steps regarding their absence record. Further guidance for managers of staff who are experiencing stress can be found on the OHS webpages, here. For full details of the outcomes available to you, see section 7.3 of the Absence Management Procedure.
Considerations for **disabled** employees	Further guidance can be found in the Reasonable Adjustments Policy. A person is disabled if they have a **physical** or **mental impairment** which has a **substantial** and **long-term** (i.e. lasting more than 12 months) **adverse effect** on their **ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities**. Disabilities can be physical, mental or both.

	If the employee discloses that they have a disability, or you believe they may have a disability, you should schedule a further discussion about this to find out more from the employee. It is important to create a culture of openness so that employees feel comfortable speaking to you and can do so in confidence. Be aware that employees may not wish to disclose a disability. However, you must consider whether an employee's absences and ability to sustain their attendance etc. might be caused by/related to a disability or underlying health condition. It might be appropriate to discuss/suggest appropriate adjustments even if a disability is not disclosed. If you haven't already, complete a Management Referral to OHS. Whilst OHS will not be able to diagnose whether an employee has a disability, they may be able to provide further insight into how a disability might affect the employee in the workplace, and suggest what adjustments might help to reduce or remove any disadvantages placed on the employee due to their disability. It is your responsibility, on receiving the OH report (following the employee's consent for it to be shared with you), to give careful consideration to any adjustments suggested, considering whether it is reasonable to accommodate some or all of them within your department. It might be appropriate to trial adjustments over an agreed period of time to see if they help. It is vital to judge adjustments based on the *actual* impact they have on the individual, their colleagues, service provision, work completion etc., rather than on any *perceived* or *anticipated* impacts. Careful documentation of any trial periods and subsequent discussions with the employee must be recorded on employee's digital file. Reasonable adjustments might include a single adjustment or a package of adjustments, for example: • changing working pattern/hours • varying existing working arrangements • providing different tools/equipment to those issued as standard for their particular role e.g. a rise-and-fall desk • providing assistive technology e.g. magnification software for the visually impaired • putting in place changes to the work environment/premises e.g. noise reduction measures. Things to consider might include: • how practical it is for the University to make the adjustment • whether the adjustment(s) help sustain the employee's return to work and maintain a satisfactory attendance • whether any cost to the University is affordable/proportionate.

	If you decide that some/all of the suggested adjustments by either the employee or OHS cannot be implemented, contact the HR Advisory Service via the HR Helpline for advice before discussing this with the employee. A record should be made of the analysis you undertook to determine that some/all of the suggested adjustments can/cannot be implemented e.g. a summary of your decision-making process. A record of what has been agreed, or not, and the reasons for your decision must be kept on the employee's digital file.
Initiate the formal attendance review process (Stage 1 or 2)	If there has been either no improvement or further deterioration in attendance or a review point has been reached you must contact the HR Advisory Service via the HR Helpline if you are considering proceeding to a formal attendance review. Explain the situation to the HR Advisory Service, providing them with detail of the employee's attendance record and all recorded discussions that have taken place to date between you and the employee. Based on this information, your HR Partner - Advisory will provide guidance on whether it is appropriate to proceed to the formal attendance review process. The final decision to proceed, however, remains at your discretion as the line manager. If you decide to proceed, confirm this with your HR Partner-Advisory. An HR Case Manager will be assigned to your case and they will record the 'case' on the central 'case management tracker'. You'll need to provide an update at the outcome stage so the tracker can be updated. It generally isn't necessary for an HR Case Manager to be present at the review meeting, but you may request their attendance if you feel you need support.

Check availability and send invitations to stage 1 or 2 formal attendance review meeting	A **note taker** must attend every formal meeting and hearing. Liaise with the HR Case Manager supporting the case, to determine who will find a suitable colleague to act as a note taker. You may allocate one yourself, or ask the HR Case Manager supporting you to contact the HR Business Support team who will allocate a note taker to support you.
	
	If you are arranging the note taker, you will need to give them details of the meeting, including:
	• Location of meeting
	• Date and time of meeting
	• Name of HR contact
	• Estimated duration of meeting
	• Type of meeting, for example:
	  ○ stage 1/ 2 review
	  ○ final stage review
	  ○ prolonged absence review meeting
	  ○ medical capability review meeting, or
	  ○ appeal hearing.
	
	And provide them with the guidance for note takers.

	Identify a suitable date for the meeting to be held, inform the note taker (and the HR Case Manager where necessary). Bear in mind that the employee must be given at least one calendar weeks' notice of the meeting. Arrange a suitable time to brief the note taker on the case in advance of the meeting, see section below '**Preparing** for a formal attendance review meeting'. You will also need to book: • a suitable room for the meeting, where you will have privacy and won't be interrupted or disturbed, and • a suitably located room (e.g. an adjoining room or waiting area) for the employee to adjourn to (with their companion if they choose to bring one). Alternatively, you may need/wish to conduct the meeting online via Microsoft Teams, for example. If so, see final section below on 'Setting up and hosting meetings and hearings remotely' for more information. Write to/email the employee using the appropriate Attendance Review Invite template letter (which you can obtain from your HR Case Manager), and **include any documents with the invitation which you will refer to in the meeting**, such as a copy of the employee's attendance record, previous RTW forms etc. As advised in the invite letter/email, the employee should let you know if they need any specific adjustment(s) for the meeting e.g. if they need a hearing loop. You must organise any adjustments requested or seek advice from your HR Case Manager.
Role of the companion	The invite template will advise the employee of their right to be accompanied at the meeting. This will normally be a TU representative or workplace colleague. A companion may also be someone to support the employee if they have particular needs. For example, if the employee has a disability, we have a duty to consider reasonable adjustments, or they may need help if English is not their first language. This companion may be in addition to a TU representative or workplace colleague. Therefore, in some circumstances the employee may have more than one companion. The companion cannot be a lawyer. A family member cannot act as a companion unless this is deemed to be a reasonable adjustment e.g. a family member is experienced in managing the employee's disability. The employee must tell the Line Manager/role holder in advance of the meeting if they are bringing a companion/companions, and who this is. A companion can set out the employee's case, sum up the employee's case, respond on the employee's behalf to any views expressed during the hearing, speak to the employee and take notes. **The companion should not answer questions on behalf of the employee.**

Employee may request to **rearrange the meeting** or fail to attend on an agreed date	The employee may request to rearrange the meeting so that they or their companion can attend. The employee must make this request to you, including proposing an alternative date/time, normally within one week of the original date. If possible, the new date proposed by the employee should be agreed in the first instance. If the proposed date can't be accommodated, suggest another date that all parties can attend as long as it will not cause any undue delay. The employee should make themselves available wherever possible but there may be some appointments they cannot reschedule e.g. if they are timetabled to teach or have another meeting which cannot be moved. If a **companion** cannot attend on a rescheduled date and no suitable alternative time can be found, you should advise the employee to find someone else to act as their companion. If the employee does not show for an arranged meeting/hearing, **find out the reason**. Liaise with your HR Case Manager about how to proceed with the case. It's only fair that an employee be given the chance to put forward their side of the case in order for a decision to be made on appropriate action, particularly if circumstances are complex. **You must reschedule a meeting at least once**. It may be necessary to reschedule on further occasions depending on the circumstances. If you, in conjunction with your HR Case Manager, determine that there is no good reason for **repeated non-attendance, or no reasonable prospect of the employee attending,** you may proceed in the employee's absence. However, as it is helpful to have a written statement from them that can be considered if they are not there, you must make every effort to obtain this in advance of proceeding.
Preparing for a formal attendance review meeting	It can be helpful to meet with the note taker in advance of the meeting to give them any useful information which will help them when taking notes e.g. it might help them to be familiar with names, acronyms, terminology, the issue(s) to be discussed etc. Liaise with the note taker to arrange a suitable time to brief them. Make sure that the note taker understands the confidential/sensitive nature of the meeting, and their responsibility to maintain confidentiality. There is guidance available for note takers, which you should direct them to. Preparation for a formal attendance review meeting should follow the same steps as detailed in the "Preparing for a return to work (RTW) discussion" section above. Ensuring that you are fully conversant with the

	employee's history is key to conducting a fair and thorough formal attendance review. You should re-familiarise yourself with: • the employee's attendance history • their medical condition(s) • any medical advice received • any support which has been offered and implemented, and • whether any previous warnings remain on file. You should be prepared to explain to and discuss with the employee why you deem their absence level to have reached an 'unsatisfactory' level (see Section 8 of the Absence Management Procedure). You must give them the opportunity to discuss their health and to share any and all information they feel is appropriate. Be prepared that you may discover something new about the employee's health and/or other factors contributing to their absence. Any new information must be taken into account during your consideration of the case.
If the employee raises a **grievance** during the process contact the HR Case Manager supporting the case	You do not necessarily have to halt the process if the employee raises a grievance. You must however discuss this with the HR Case Manager supporting the case and agree on how best to proceed in the circumstances.
The meeting - process	If the employee has a companion with them, they can take notes, set out the employee's case and speak to the employee during the meeting. The employee or companion may request an adjournment at any time during the meeting to discuss matters in private. The companion cannot answer questions on behalf of the employee. Make introductions. If the employee does not have a companion with them, reiterate that they were informed of their right to be accompanied and check they have chosen not to. This should be noted by the note taker. Ask everyone to turn off any electronic devices and remind them that the meeting cannot be recorded. If the employee requests to electronically record the meeting, explain that this is not allowed but they will be provided with meeting notes. They may also wish to make their own notes which is acceptable. Explain what will happen during the meeting. The meeting will normally follow this structure: • You will summarise your concerns and observations regarding the employee's attendance record • You will ask the employee to summarise the reasons for their latest period of absence and update on any treatment or support they have received/are receiving and how this is progressing • You may highlight any patterns or trends in their absences that you have identified and ask the employee to comment/explain

	• You will ask the employee to offer any suggestions as to what else might be helpful to them in improving their attendance at work, and whether they feel an improvement is likely/possible • You will discuss whether there are any underlying health conditions or disabilities which have/are contributing to their absences, how these conditions/disabilities impact on their ability to work and what could be put in place to help reduce the impact of their health on their ability to attend work. • You will discuss any advice and information received from OHS • The meeting will be adjourned (see 'During the adjournment' section below). The employee should be asked to wait in another area (with their companion if they have one) while you consider the information gathered and reach a conclusion • The employee is called back to the meeting • The employee is advised of the outcome. If a warning is issued, they must be told of their right to appeal. The employee is advised that the outcome will be confirmed in writing, normally within one calendar week. • Meeting ends
Possible outcomes	The possible **outcomes** of a formal attendance review meeting are: • **No formal action**: you continue to monitor the employee's absence levels and pattern on an informal basis • **Formal action**: you issue a formal written warning (Stage 1) or, if they already have a live formal written warning, a formal final written warning (Stage 2) for poor attendance, which will last for one or two years respectively from the date of the meeting. Regardless of the outcome, the following may also be considered, if appropriate: • **Reasonable adjustments**: you will agree to make reasonable adjustments, either short or long-term, to help the employee to improve and sustain their attendance. Examples might include adjusting working hours, pattern or duties – any adjustments must be considered on the specific circumstances and should be mutually agreed, you may require further advice from OHS. Please see the Reasonable Adjustments Policy for further information. • **Further medical advice sought**: you will seek further medical advice or clarification from OHS. You must make it clear to the employee what level of attendance is required from them in the future, in order for them to avoid further formal action.
During the adjournment	During the adjournment you must decide what outcome is appropriate based on the information provided by the employee in response to your concerns. You should take into account the reason for their absences, the actions they are taking to improve their health and attendance, and any live warnings.

	You must take due time to consider the information gathered during the meeting. However, an adjournment should **not be for an extended period** and you should reach a decision as soon as practicably possible. It will be stressful for the employee waiting to know the outcome. Once a decision has been reached, you must reconvene the meeting and deliver the outcome verbally, explaining that it will also be confirmed in writing and informing the employee of their right to appeal (where a formal warning has been issued). If you need more time because there is a lot to consider or you need clarification on any issues e.g. procedural/OHS advice, you can advise the employee that you require more time to reach a decision and that you will notify them of the outcome verbally and in writing and when you will do so.
Agree the notes of the meeting	The note taker will send you a draft set of the notes of the meeting, normally within two calendar days of the meeting. You may amend them if there are any details that have not been recorded accurately e.g. spelling, terminology or where key details have been missed. You cannot change the substance of what a person said during the meeting, including your own comments. If possible, you should send the notes to the employee with the letter confirming the outcome of the meeting. Alternatively agree with your HR Case Manager if they are to be sent separately and by whom.
Write to the employee confirming the outcome of the meeting	You must write to the employee within one calendar week of the meeting confirming the outcome. Use the appropriate Attendance Review Outcome template letter which you can obtain from your HR Case Manager. Once issued to the employee, you must also send a copy to your HR Case Manager who will upload it to the employee's digital file and update the case management tracker.
Following conclusion of the meeting, **'review points' are reset**	As you have now concluded the formal process, you will not be able to take any further action on the absences which prompted the formal review, other than to illustrate where a pattern exists/continues if further formal action is necessary in the future. As far as the University's review points are concerned (i.e. 3 spells over 6-months, or 10 intermittent days in 12-months), the employee would need to reach these review points again post the date of the meeting to trigger the need for further formal action. Please note you do not necessarily have to wait for 6 or 12 months. If an employee reaches 3 further spells of absence in, say, 3 months, you may proceed to the next stage at that point, if appropriate.

If an appeal is lodged, attend the **appeal hearing**	If the employee appeals the decision, you will need to attend the appeal hearing. You will be provided with the grounds of appeal. You must ensure you familiarise yourself with the case again. On the day of the appeal hearing, make sure you have the relevant documentation and notes with you. You will need to explain how you reached your decision and why you decided to issue a particular sanction. The appeal panel and the employee will ask you questions. Please note however, it is not a re-hearing of the case.
No improvement following stage 2 review meeting	If the employee's attendance does not improve or deteriorates further following the stage 2 review meeting, you must alert the employee to your ongoing concerns. This may be during a return to work discussion or in a review of their attendance during the period within which you are continuing to monitor their attendance levels. Refer to section 8 of the Absence Management Policy for details of the University's review points. If appropriate, you must arrange for a (further) Management Referral to OHS and discuss the situation with your manager, or their nominated deputy. They will arrange and chair a final stage review meeting with the employee, if appropriate. You are usually required to attend. See 'Chair of Final Stage Review' or 'Chair of Medical Capacity Review Meeting' guidance for more information.
Managing Prolonged Absence	An employee who is off for **substantially longer than four weeks** and is likely to require **more support than usual during their absence and in returning to work**, is deemed to be on a period of 'prolonged absence'. Periods of prolonged absence include absences where the employee has made attempts to return to work but has been unable to sustain their return i.e. you would not treat these 'interrupted' periods of absence as frequent short-term absences in regard to the process by which you manage them. As soon as it becomes clear that an absence is likely to be for a **prolonged period**, you must seek advice from the **HR Advisory Service via the HR Helpline** and the **Occupational Health Service (OHS)**. The earlier you engage OHS in a potential long-term ill-health matter, the better informed you will be in supporting the employee. You must advise the employee that you intend to refer them to OHS and fully explain your rationale for the referral. Submit the Management Referral, aligning it directly with the explanation you have given the employee, i.e. you should not include anything in the OH referral that you have not already discussed with the employee.

	OHS may provide advice on return to work, rehabilitation, job modification, transfer/redeployment or early retirement, as appropriate. You may contact OHS directly if you have any questions or need guidance on completing the Management Referral. Once the Management Referral has been submitted, it will be passed to the relevant OH Adviser for your area. They will invite the employee to an OHS consultation as soon as possible.
Occupational Health report and meeting with the employee	Once the OH Adviser has met with the employee and prepared their report, they will discuss the content of the report with the employee. They will seek the employee's consent to share their report with you so that you can discuss matters further with the employee at a prolonged absence review meeting. If the employee consents, the OHS report will be sent to you. You must review the content and consider the points made during your discussions with the employee. Where the employee does not consent to OHS sharing their report with you, you will need to decide how best to support the employee and manage their absence without the benefit of OHS advice and recommendations. You may seek advice from the HR Advisory Service via the HR Helpline in such circumstances, to establish how best to support the employee in the absence of the OHS report. Arrangements and preparations for the prolonged absence review meeting should follow the guidance detailed in the above sections on: • Check availability and send invitations, • Preparing for a formal attendance review meeting and • Setting up and hosting meetings and hearings remotely. Please also refer to sections 12.2 and 12.3 of the Absence Management Policy for more information about the review meeting and possible outcomes. Note - The role of OHS is purely advisory, any recommendations they make must be carefully considered by you in determining whether or not some/all of the recommendations can be implemented. You must discuss your decision on the implementation of OHS's recommendations with the HR Advisory Service before delivering it to the employee and explaining your rationale.
Medical Capacity Review meeting	If the employee continues to be absent and you have done **all** of the below: • conducted an initial review meeting and any appropriate subsequent review meetings • obtained and discussed any OHS advice • considered and are able to implement any adjustments • judged that you don't foresee a return to work (in any capacity)

	• other solutions have been tried and failed to prove successful in returning the employee to work You may decide to refer the absent employee to your manager, or their nominated deputy for a formal Medical Capacity Review Meeting, See section 12.4 of the Absence Management Policy.
Be aware of **Data protection** and **Subject Access Request** requirements	Information relating to the management of an employee's absence from work must be held in line with the University's Retention Schedule. This includes all email correspondence as well as all formal letters and sanctions. Remember that an employee may make a data subject access request (SAR) to see information about their case which will include any emails between you and HR or any other person you raise the case with. Therefore, it is vital any written notes or records made about the case are factual, considered and professional, noting only relevant information, and saved to the employee's digital file – therefore, please provide your HR Case Manager with all notes and records on conclusion of the case. SAR's may be requested by individuals for ALL information held about them, even where they are only referenced using initials or other aliases.

Guidance for setting up and hosting meetings and hearings remotely

Action	Supporting information
Agree that all participants have **the equipment and access** to attend an online meeting and are **willing to participate** using this forum	It is important to check that all participants of a meeting have the appropriate equipment and access to meaningfully take part in a remote, online meeting – and to do so prior to making any of the necessary arrangements. If the employee does not have **access to a PC or MS Teams** contact your HR Case Manager to consider alternatives e.g. providing the technology required or seeking alternative means of holding the meeting. Check if the employee has a **suitable environment** where they can attend the meeting/hearing in private. Be aware that they may work in a shared space on campus or at home. If they don't have a suitable environment liaise with your HR Case Manager to see if there are any alternatives. For example, could the meeting be held face to face, or a room be found for them in a designated building on campus to attend the meeting remotely (subject to appropriate Health & Safety requirements)? Note: the employee is responsible for ensuring their companion can support them at an on-line meeting/hearing.
Prepare for the meeting/hearing	Set up the meeting via **Microsoft (MS) Teams**. Information about hosting and joining MS Teams meetings is available here. Make sure you invite all the relevant parties including a note taker. Be aware that attendees may have particular needs in order to participate in the meeting/hearing via MS Teams e.g. if they have a hearing or visual impairment, you may need to investigate whether additional technology or support is required. The employee should let you know if they require any **reasonable adjustments** to take part. Please refer to the Reasonable Adjustments Policy for further information.

Pre- meeting, where applicable	You should have a meeting with other panel members/HR Case Manager prior to your meeting/hearing with the employee. If you hold the pre-meeting directly before the meeting/hearing with the employee, it is best to set this up as a **separate MS Teams meeting.** This ensures that you cannot be interrupted or cut short if the employee or their companion 'arrive' earlier than expected. Alternatively use the **lobby room** function to allow the employee and companion to join the meeting/hearing when the panel is ready. Information about hosting MS Teams meetings, privacy guidance and lobby areas can be found here.
Establish familiarity with technology	It is possible that the employee may have limited experience of MS Teams meetings. At the start of the meeting/hearing establish how familiar they are with **technical functions**. If they are not familiar, walk them through functions such as how to mute their microphone, raise a hand, use the chat function etc. If use of the written 'chat' function is to be utilised during the meeting, make sure that all participants are mindful that anything noted in the chat section, will be captured by the note taker after the meeting as part of the record of the meeting. In the event of any Subject Access Request, the 'chat' has to be included in the information provided.
Meeting etiquette	If you are chairing the meeting/hearing establish basic rules at the start. These should include: • Everyone should be on mute unless speaking • Raise a hand if need to make a point • The note taker should be off camera after introductions • Everyone else to keep cameras on unless there are connectivity issues • The meeting cannot be recorded either through MS Teams or other devices e.g. mobile phones • Clarify what participants should do if they lose connection or are unable to hear during the meeting (e.g. post a note in the 'chat', email or call the Chair, etc.) • If an adjournment is required everyone will leave the meeting and return at an agreed time

	Note: If the meeting is such that an adjournment is necessary, a separate meeting should be arranged so that all participants may meet, outside of the main meeting. Prepare and share a proposed **running order/schedule** for the meeting/hearing so that everyone understands when it will be their turn to speak or answer questions.
Progress of meeting/hearing	You may have to **adapt** how the meeting/hearing progresses to take account of the remote circumstances. Outline to and agree with the employee at the start if you are likely to deviate from the normal procedural format. If all parties are agreeable, you can confirm that the employee will be **notified in writing** of the outcome within the timescale specified in the policy. Otherwise, reconvene the meeting by calling the employee, and companion if they have one, back at a specified time.

Letters, forms and templates:

Return to Work form
Implementing Adjustments Form

(The following templates are available from your HR Case Manager)
RTW discussion – Suggested wording for invitation email
Stage 1 or 2 Review Letter - Invite
Stage 1 or 2 Review Letter - Outcome
Final Stage Review - Invite
Final Stage Review - Outcome
Prolonged Absence – OH Referral form
Review Meeting Invite – Prolonged Absence
Review Meeting – Outcome