

## Sickness Absence Management Procedure Equality Impact Assessment

**“Proposal” is used as shorthand for any policy document, practice or project that might be assessed.**

Audience:	Public
Applies to:	All Staff
Classification:	Management
Category:	Equality Impact Assessment
Subcategory:	Staff
Author:	People and OD Manager
Owner:	Director of People and Organisational Development
Sign-Off Date:	17 February 2025
Review Date:	29 February 2028

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## Stage 1: Rapid Equality Impact Assessment Checklist

“Proposal” is used as shorthand for any policy document, practice or project that might be assessed.

Please provide a brief description of the proposal:

Revised Sickness Absence Management Procedure – following full review.

Reason for the Equality Impact Assessment: Proposed changes/review of existing proposal

Could any protected characteristics be affected by this proposal: Yes

If Yes, which protected characteristic groups could be affected (select all that apply)?

- Age
- Disability (including by association)
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership<sup>1</sup>
- Pregnancy or Maternity
- Race (including ethnicity and nationality)
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

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<sup>1</sup>Only the duty to eliminate discrimination applies to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect

Will the proposal have any impact on:

Discrimination?	No
Equality of opportunity?	No
Relations between groups?	No

Will the proposal have an impact on the physical environment?

Living conditions?	No
Working conditions?	No
Pollution or climate change?	No
Accidental injuries or public safety?	No
Other	No

If selected Other, please provide more information:

If the answer to any of the above is 'Yes':

Is the impact only beneficial?	Yes
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## Stage 2: Comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA)

### Summary of the Proposal and Who will be effected?

What are the aims and objectives of the proposal?

The Sickness Absence Management Policy promotes equality and fairness, offering a consistent approach to managing sickness absence across the University. However, it is important to continuously monitor the implementation of this policy to ensure that it is not inadvertently disadvantageous to any particular group, particularly those with protected characteristics. By ensuring that all employees are treated with fairness and respect, the University can create a more inclusive and supportive workplace.

How important is the proposal in terms of equality in the University? Does it relate to an area with known inequalities or where equality objectives have been set by the University?

No known inequalities, focus will be on the following:

**Training for Managers:** Implement mandatory training for line managers on the importance of fair and unbiased absence management. This will include guidance on managing absence related to disability, pregnancy, and other personal factors.

**Reasonable Adjustments:** Ensure all employees are aware of their right to request reasonable adjustments, particularly for those with disabilities or chronic health issues.

**Clear Communication:** Communicate the policy clearly to all staff, ensuring that it is accessible to employees from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Consider translating materials where necessary.

**Monitoring:** Establish a monitoring process to track sickness absence data, ensuring that any trends that could indicate potential discrimination or inequality are identified and addressed.

Who is affected by the proposal and how have they been involved in the development of it?

All stakeholders were involved, including line managers, staff, Lead Voices, JLG (recognised trade unions) and the external Business Disability Forum for advice.

Are any persons affected by the proposal likely to benefit from it and in what way?

Yes – in that the procedure includes supportive measures, e.g. for disabled people.

Is there any evidence or concern that any of the protected characteristic groups have different experiences, issues or needs in relation to this document? Yes

If Yes, which protected characteristic groups could be affected (select all that apply)?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Race (including ethnicity and nationality)    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability (including by association) | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion or belief (including lack of belief) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Reassignment                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sex   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage and Civil Partnership <sup>2</sup>      | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual orientation                            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy or Maternity                |  |

Please provide further details:

The document recognises that disabled staff may have particular issues and needs in relation to this procedure, including in relation to reasonable adjustments. This is addressed directly in the procedure.

How does the proposal fit into the broader strategic aims of the University?

The Procedure is relevant to the People Strategy. It promotes a fair and consistent approach to sickness absence, ensuring that all staff members are treated equitably, regardless of their personal circumstances or protected characteristics. Employees with disabilities, pregnancy-related issues, or other health concerns are provided with avenues for reasonable adjustments and accommodations, fostering an inclusive environment. The policy's flexibility in supporting absence management can reduce stress and encourage employees to report sickness without fear of reprisal, especially for those facing chronic or long-term health issues.

## Consideration of available data

What do we know from existing data already held by the University?

The following data are available, and have informed the understanding of the context for the Procedure:

- Employee diversity data
- Absence records and trends (e.g., absenteeism by age, gender, disability)
- Employee feedback (surveys, focus groups)
- Consultation with People Services and staff representatives

What do we know from existing data which is available externally?

N/A

Are there any apparent gaps in knowledge?

No

## Impact of Proposal

Could this proposal lead to any positive, negative, intended or unintended impact on the University or any of its stakeholders?

There may be potential for unconscious bias in managing absence, particularly for employees from underrepresented groups or those with long-term conditions, including disabilities or mental health concerns. Without an effective procedure, certain groups could be inadvertently disadvantaged (e.g., women who experience pregnancy-related absences, or older workers with more frequent sickness), for example if absence were viewed purely in terms of “frequency”. This Procedure is intended to prevent such impacts by ensuring a fair and consistent approach and providing the relevant procedures and guidance.

Could there be a differential<sup>2</sup> impact on any protected characteristics? Could any differential impact be adverse?

Characteristic	Potential Positive Impact	Potential Negative Impact	Mitigation/Action
Age	The procedure is designed to be fair and consistent for all	Older employees may experience more health issues and could face potential	Ensure line managers are trained to avoid age bias. Provide

<sup>2</sup> Differential impact = where the positive or negative impact on one particular protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Potential Positive Impact</b>	<b>Potential Negative Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation/Action</b>
	ages. Older employees may appreciate flexibility in absence reporting or support due to health-related issues.	discrimination or bias in assessments if not handled carefully.	flexible options for reporting absence.
<b>Disability</b>	The policy encourages early reporting and seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities.	Employees with long-term disabilities may face challenges with consistent absence monitoring, leading to unfair comparisons with non-disabled staff.	Implement clear protocols for reasonable adjustments. Ensure that absence related to disability is treated with understanding and not penalised unfairly.
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	The policy applies equally to all staff, regardless of gender identity, ensuring that absence is treated consistently.	Staff may feel uncomfortable disclosing gender identity, which could lead to lack of access to necessary support.	Ensure confidentiality is maintained and that staff feel safe to disclose their identity if necessary for specific accommodations.
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b>	No direct impact anticipated, as the policy applies to all employees regardless of relationship status.	There may be cases where personal circumstances affect absence patterns, but the policy does not distinguish between relationship status.	Ensure flexibility for employees facing challenges at home or in their personal relationships that may impact their health.
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>	The policy accommodates maternity leave and provides support for those managing absence during	Pregnant employees may have more frequent sickness absence or need additional support, which could be perceived as	Ensure that absence related to pregnancy and maternity is managed separately from other types of

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Potential Positive Impact</b>	<b>Potential Negative Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation/Action</b>
	or after pregnancy.	problematic if not managed fairly.	absence and is not penalised.
<b>Race</b>	The policy applies equally to all employees regardless of race. The aim is to support all employees equally.	Cultural differences may influence how employees approach sickness absence or report it, potentially leading to misunderstandings or biases.	Ensure that line managers are culturally competent and can support all staff without bias. Provide information about the policy in multiple languages if necessary.
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	The policy applies equally to all employees regardless of religion or belief, with consideration for religious observances or beliefs related to health.	Religious observances may lead to absence patterns that are not clearly understood by management.	Ensure flexibility around religious holidays and observances.
<b>Sex</b>	The policy supports both male and female employees equally.	Female employees may face unique health issues, such as those related to menstruation or menopause, which could affect absence.	Provide support for female employees regarding health issues like menopause, and ensure these are treated without bias.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	The policy applies equally regardless of sexual orientation, ensuring fairness for all employees.	Employees may face health-related challenges that they feel uncomfortable disclosing, particularly if they face stigma around their sexual orientation.	Ensure that the policy is inclusive and that all employees feel comfortable disclosing health information without fear of discrimination.



**Please consider:**

Is this policy directly discriminatory? If yes, is it intended to increase equality? If no, this is unlawful discrimination.

Is this policy indirectly discriminatory? If yes, is this justifiable or proportionate? If no, this is unlawful discrimination.

If this policy is not indirectly discriminatory but could have an adverse impact on any of the protected characteristics, you must provide details of how the University will act to address this.

Is this policy unlawfully discriminatory? If you find that it is, you must decide how the University will act lawfully.

**Consultation**

What did this equality analysis conclude?

The policy is not discriminatory. The main aim of the review of the procedure is to provide better understanding of the procedure and clearer guidance to ensure that no discrimination takes place in relation to sickness absence management.

Is any action required to be taken in response to the findings from the consultation?

Not at this stage, continual monitoring as described above should take place.

What is the recommendation for this proposal following consultation?

Approve the proposal

If selected Other, please provide more information:

**Declaration**

I confirm that this equality analysis represents a fair and reasonable view of the implications of the proposal for all protected characteristic groups, and that appropriate actions have been identified to address the findings.

<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Individual</b>
Carolyn Boland	17 February 2025	CEIA owner
Eilidh Fraser	17 February 2025	Line manager*

\* if appropriate

## Action and Monitoring

No immediate actions. Monitoring through regular reporting on sickness absence and trends, e.g. through reporting to SMT and PHEC twice per year, and the annual Occupational Health report.

## Equality Impact Assessment Outcome

What is the recommended outcome for this proposal?

Outcome 1: No change required – the assessment is that the proposal will be robust.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this policy document and related policy documents, terms are defined in the Policy Document Library Glossary.

## Related Policy Documents and Supporting Documents

Legislation	Equality Act 2010; Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012
Strategy	Abertay University Strategic Plan and all sub-strategies
Policy	Equality and Diversity Policy; Policy Document Governance Policy
Procedures	Policy Document Governance Procedure
Guidelines	Equality Impact Assessment Guidance
Local Protocol	N/A
Forms	N/A