



DITSU Ltd policy and procedures for the management of absence due to illness and injury.

INTRODUCTION

DITSU is committed to best practice in human resource management recognising that healthy and supported staff are key assets to the organisation.

While there is no legal requirement on employers to provide an occupational sick pay scheme, DITSU Ltd is committed to supporting staff that may become sick and need to be absent from work due to illness or injury. The DITSU Ltd Occupational Sick Leave Scheme is overseen by a policy and procedures for the management of absences due to illness and injury.

Becoming sick or experiencing periods of ill health is part and parcel of any work place. At times of sickness, DITSU Ltd recognises that employees are acting responsibly by staying at home to recover, instead of coming to work and either passing on their illness to other staff, or returning to work too early and getting a more severe illness.

Equally, it is recognised that as a membership based organisation any staff absence effects the whole organisation and impacts on DITSU's ability to carry out our work and deliver services to our members and stakeholders.

The DITSU Ltd Occupational Sick Leave Scheme and Policy for the Management of Absences due to Illness and Injury were designed to support staff in cases of genuine illness or injury and to provide a means of ensuring a balance between staff welfare and the need for effective service delivery in DITSU.

DITSU monitors and records all sick leave absences to ensure good staff management and the proper implementation of the Policy. This is done in line with good practice and data protection requirements.

Staff are expected to attend work regularly and to give effective service. Failure to do so is a breach of their terms and conditions of employment. Abuse or misuse of the DITSU Ltd Occupational Sick Leave Scheme will be subject to disciplinary action.

Through this policy and associated procedures, DITSU Ltd will put in place support arrangements for the management of absence as a result of illness or injury and guidelines to best support staff who are experiencing short-term or prolonged health issues. For example, this could include a work station assessment by the on-site Occupational Health Officer or referral to the EAP.

DEFINITION OF “SICKNESS ABSENCE”

Sickness absence arises where:

- illness or injury makes a person unfit to work; and/or

- a duly qualified and registered medical doctor or dentist advises a staff member to stay away from work due to illness, convalescence, the possibility of having a contagious illness or otherwise in the interest of the health and safety of the individual concerned and/or other members of staff.

TYPE OF ABSENCE

• SHORT-TERM ABSENCE

Short-term absence is any absence for a period of time of four days or less.

This type of absence does not normally have a set pattern and is usually caused by minor, in most cases, unconnected ailments.

• LONG-TERM OR PROLONGED ABSENCE

Long-term or prolonged absence is any continuous certified absence for a period exceeding two weeks.

This type of absence is normally the result of an illness or injury requiring convalescence or a period of ill health resulting from an underlying medical condition.

• FREQUENT AND PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Frequent and persistent absence is defined where a staff member is absent due to sickness (certified or uncertified) comprising:

- (a) three occasions of absence (or more) in any 12 month rolling period; or
- (b) any patterns of absence (e.g. Mondays and Fridays, days immediately preceding or following a period of planned annual leave, bank holiday or concession days; or
- (c) where there is a pattern of absence at the same time period each year.
- (c) Regular annual patterns of paid sick leave

• UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

This occurs when a staff member's absence:

- (a) is not supported by a duly qualified and registered medical practitioner or dentist covering the full period of such absence as set out in the DITSU Ltd Occupational Sick Leave Scheme
- (b) has not been authorised by the appropriate level of management; or
- (c) has not been communicated to DITSU Ltd using the correct procedure.

Unauthorised absences will be addressed through the appropriate DITSU Ltd disciplinary procedures.

MEDICAL EXAMINATION

In all absences as a result of illness or injury DITSU Ltd may request, and has the right to require, an independent medical examination and detailed medical report on the employee including a fitness for work statement. The medical practitioners(s) will be suitably qualified and be nominated by DITSU Ltd.

Continual payment of sick pay is conditional on the employee authorising the release of their medical records from their own medical practitioner / dentist to the DITSU Ltd's medical practitioner. DITSU Ltd will incur the cost of an independent medical assessment.

If the DITSU Ltd nominated medical examiner determines that an employee is NOT fit to return to work DITSU Ltd may require the staff member to remain or to go on sick leave until subsequent medical review(s) can take place.

In the case of a staff member having a contagious illness or otherwise in the interest of the health and safety of the individual concerned and/or other members of staff DITSU Ltd may require the staff member to remain on sick leave until they are fit to return to work.

RETURN TO WORK MEETINGS

The Deputy CEO will check in with an employee on return to work after an absence of more than 5 working days. If the absence is longer than 5 working days, this may necessitate a return to work meeting between the staff member and the Deputy CEO. The existence of a return to work meeting provides an opportunity for DITSU Ltd to better understand the reason for the absence and support the staff member to maximize their attendance and performance at work.

These meetings will be conducted with sensitivity and in confidence. Where an employee's sick leave record is generally very good and the reason for absences routine, an informal check in about the state of her/his health will normally suffice.

EXCLUSION FROM OCCUPATIONAL SICK LEAVE SCHEME

Staff who fail to comply with any aspect of the DITSU Ltd Occupational Sick Leave Scheme may be excluded from the benefits of the scheme.

No benefit under this policy will be paid to employees who are absent from work due to illness or injury sustained in any other employment.

In addition, absences from work due to illness or injury as a result of participation in illegal activities, high-risk leisure pursuits or as a result of any irresponsible behaviour on the part of the employee are not covered by the DITSU Ltd Occupational Sick Leave Scheme.

Furthermore, no benefit under this policy will be paid to employees who are absent from work due to illness or injury resulting from the deliberate failure to observe safety practices, procedures or customs in practice in DITSU. Nor will the benefit be paid to an employee who fails or neglects to use properly prescribed safety equipment.

Failure to undergo examination by DITSU Ltd's nominated medical expert may result in exclusion from the Scheme.

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Poor attendance arising from illness or injury which renders a staff member incapable of fulfilling the needs of the job in the long-term may result in their being certified as unfit for the job and the staff member's employment may be terminated with appropriate notice on the grounds of incapacity due to ill health.

Approved by the Board of DITSU Ltd on 26th June 2013

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH FREQUENT AND PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Staff with patterns of frequent or persistent absences or repeated episodes of sick leave (certified and uncertified) will be asked to meet with the Deputy CEO.

Staff may be referred to a DITSU Ltd nominated medical practitioner(s) to determine their fitness to work.

DITSU Ltd may contact the staff member at home to arrange for a designated medical practitioner to visit that staff member at home during a period of sick leave absence. This option will be available where the staff member is unable to travel or where it otherwise facilitates the referral to a DITSU Ltd nominated medical practitioner.

NO UNDERLYING MEDICAL COMPLAINT

If a member of staff is declared fit for work, DITSU Ltd will expect him/her to attend for work on a regular basis.

If however sickness levels continue to be unacceptable, or if there is a subsequent lapse following a period of improvement, sickness may be monitored for a further period.

If there are further certified absences, DITSU Ltd retains the right to refer or re refer the staff member to a DITSU Ltd external medical practitioner.

If the member of staff still does not attend work on a regular basis, DITSU Ltd will deal with this through the appropriate procedures. The staff member will be informed of the unsatisfactory attendance.

For example, where it has been determined by the external medical practitioner that a staff member is fit for work and there are further absences either certified or uncertified, the DITSU Ltd Disciplinary Policy may be invoked.

UNDERLYING MEDICAL COMPLAINT

Where a staff member has underlying medical condition that renders them unable to give regular service, DITSU Ltd will support them in their recovery and return to work in so far as they can.

DITSU Ltd will consult with the member of staff and take independent medical advice to establish whether there are any reasonable adjustments that may be made to their job to assist them resume their work. Reasonable adjustments may include a staggered return to work, a temporary adjustment in working hours, and/or a temporary change in duties. Any significant adjustments would need to be approved by the Board of DITSU Ltd and a clear time line and work plan established to ensure effective implementation.

If this is not possible, the DITSU Ltd will consider whether there is any alternative work that the member of staff would be able to do. Where appropriate DITSU Ltd will make every effort to place an employee in an alternative role. An alternative job suitable for the member of staff may be at a lower level of seniority, with entirely different responsibilities, at a different level of pay or different hours of work.

If the member of staff has an underlying medical condition that has necessitated, or will necessitate, long-term absence, DITSU Ltd will investigate, if appropriate in all circumstances and after taking independent medical advice, the possibility of early retirement on the grounds of ill health. This will be decided on a case by case basis by the Board of DITSU Ltd. It is expected that where there are repeated absences over a period of 6 months or more the Deputy CEO will produce a report for consideration by the Board of DITSU Ltd.

If the above options are not possible, DITSU Ltd, after taking appropriate medical advice, may decide to terminate employment with appropriate notice on the grounds of incapacity due to ill health.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH PROLONGED ILLNESS OR INJURY

A staff member returning to work following a prolonged period of absence due to illness (usually two weeks or longer) should submit a medical certificate from a medical examiner confirming that he/she is fully fit to resume.

If temporary adjustments are required - for example temporary changes to a staff member's working hours, duties or work load - in order to support the employee's return to work these should be requested in advance and supported by a medical examiner's report. All requests will be viewed sympathetically. However not all requested adjustments may be possible.

In the case of a prolonged illness or injury medical certificates should be submitted at fortnightly intervals following submission of the initial certificate.

In addition, the staff member must at all times maintain directly weekly contact with the Deputy CEO during periods of prolonged absence due to illness or injury. In some cases it may be appropriate for DITSU Ltd to maintain contact with a nominated relative or other individual instead.

RECORDING OF SICK LEAVE

DITSU Ltd monitors and records all sick leave absences to ensure good staff management and the proper implementation of the Policy. This is done in line with good practice and data protection requirements.

Where a staff member goes home or is sent home sick, having completed less than 50% of rostered time, this will be recorded as a half day, more than 50% of rostered time will be recorded as full attendance

Where a staff member is absent for a full day on sick leave this episode will be recorded as one days absence that day.

The Deputy CEO will inform staff in writing if they are approaching the exhaustion of their certified or uncertified sick leave entitlement. This will normally be sent via a personal email address and or by regular post.

STAFF COVER DURING PERIOD OF SICK LEAVE

DIT Students' Union is funded through student capitation payments. Where a member of staff is absent due to prolonged illness or injury it may be possible to recruit additional staff to provide cover subject to availability of funding (however, no specific provision is included in budgets for doing so).

Cover for prolonged illness or injury absence may take various forms, for example:

- another member of staff or members of staff providing cover for the role and/or duties.
- the sharing of work within a working group or any other relevant work team.
- recruitment of a temporary employee to provide partial or full time cover for the role and/or duties,
- discontinuation of part of the role and/or duties.

A contract issued to any temporary staff replacement will specify that it will be terminated when the member of staff returns from sick leave and that one week's (or one month's notice, as appropriate) will be given in the event that the contract is discontinued.

WORK RELATED ILLNESS OR INJURY

Where agreed by the Board of DITSU, the following periods of absence are not counted against sick leave entitlement:

- (i) Absence arising from an accident occurring to an employee in the course of his/her duty where the employee was not at fault.

- (ii) Absence due to an infectious or industrial disease contracted by an employee while on duty.

ABUSE OF OCCUPATIONAL SICK LEAVE SCHEME

The granting of sick leave and / or sick pay is not an automatic right, but is at the discretion of the board of DITSU Ltd. An employee's sick pay entitlement may be suspended for a 12-month period if there is evidence of abuse of the scheme.

The scheme is designed as a benefit for employees genuinely absent from work due to illness or injury. Where an employee deliberately defrauds the scheme, this will be treated as serious misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action or dismissal under the DITSU Disciplinary Procedure.

It will be considered gross misconduct for an employee to undertake any other paid employment whilst absent through illness or injury and any such action may result in disciplinary action under the DITSU Disciplinary Procedure up to and including dismissal.

DISMISSAL AND APPEAL

In the event that DITSU Ltd is considering the termination of employment as a result of sick leave absences and/or a staff member's fitness for work, the member of staff will be given a written statement of the grounds for contemplating dismissal. The procedures as set out in DITSU Ltd's disciplinary policy and procedures will apply.

Throughout the process DITSU Ltd will take into account all the circumstances of individual cases including medical opinion and operational requirements. Staff will be fully informed and consulted and will be given, at the earliest opportunity, clear information about their position. Any queries concerning the procedure should be addressed to the Deputy CEO.

DITSU Ltd. reserves the right to change or alter these entitlements from time to time.

DITSU Ltd will notify staff of any changes in this policy before the date of the proposed changes and will provide for consultation as appropriate.