

SICKNESS ABSENCE: POLICY AND PROCEDURES (Postgraduate Research Students)

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The School aims to secure the regular attendance of **all postgraduate students** in order to meet mutual contractual obligations. However, the School recognises that a certain level of absence may be due to medical grounds (i.e. health or any other physical or mental quality). It is the School's policy to offer security during such periods, subject to operational requirements. The School, therefore, aims to balance the sensitive nature of genuine individual sickness and invalidity against its need to be publicly accountable for its resource allocation. It is essential that the following procedures be carried out with tact and sensitivity and a realisation that the management of sickness absence is the joint responsibility of the School and the individual student.

2. PROCEDURES

2.1 Students who are absent due to sickness or accident should conform to the following procedure.

- a) The student must contact his/her supervisor to give details of his/her absence normally within the first few days of absence.
- b) If the absence lasts for longer than seven days, the student must forward medical certificates at weekly/fortnightly or appropriate intervals as requested by the School. Failure to provide a Doctor's certificate may result in University scholarship monies being withheld for the days in question but if payment was necessary to obtain a Doctor's certificate, the student would be reimbursed.

2.2 Where appropriate, and after initial assessments of the problem, the School will take the following actions:

- (a) If the absences are of a frequent and persistent nature over a 6 month period, with the absence of a doctor's certificate, the School PG Advisor and the Supervisor will interview the student (who may be accompanied by a friend or student representative). The interview will aim to:
 - 1) identify the frequency and reason for the absences and ensure that the student is aware that the absence record is giving cause for concern,
 - 2) advise the student to seek proper medical attention if there is a medical problem.
 - 3) inform the student that the persistent short-term absences are likely to hamper their progress and draw the student's attention to this policy,
 - 4) give consideration to the student's personal circumstances and possible ways of helping the student resolve any problems which may prevent them from attending.

- 5) agree a reasonable period of time over which the student's attendance can be improved.
- 6) indicate what the next step will be if the student fails to reach the standard required.

A letter will be written confirming the facts, the action to be taken, a relevant timescale, and specifying what will happen if attendance is not improved. This will be handed to the student or sent to his/her home address by recorded delivery mail. A copy of this letter will be kept on the student's personal file by the School.

3. LONG TERM ABSENCE DUE TO ILL HEALTH OR DISABILITY

If the issues involve long-term ill health (normally extending beyond 3 months) the School PG Advisor and the Supervisor will interview the student (who may be accompanied by a friend or student representative). The interview will aim to:

- (a) seek to establish the reasons for absence and its likely duration.
- (b) consider alternative methods of study, e.g. part-time
- (c) consider suspension of studies for the period of illness

A letter will be written confirming the facts and the action to be taken. The letter will be handed to the student where possible or sent by recorded delivery. A copy of this letter will be kept on the student's file.

4. CONTINUATION OF SCHOLARSHIP PAYMENTS DURING SICKNESS ABSENCE

Each case will be considered individually and all efforts to assist students complete their studies will be made. However, as a general guideline, as long as students provide medical certification of illness they will continue to receive their scholarship payments in full for the first six months of any period of illness and the School may waive any tutoring commitment during the period, if appropriate.

June 2005