



TITLE: SICKNESS ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Approved By	Management Board	Date Approved	13 December 2017
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Superseded or Obsolete Policy / Procedure(s)		Owner	
		Human Resources	

1. Purpose of Policy

Carlow College, St. Patrick's (hereafter Carlow College) recognises that formally managing attendance can help to reduce the impact of sickness absence on the smooth running of the College.

Through this policy and associated procedures, Carlow College has put in place support arrangements for the management of sickness absence.

The *Sickness Absence Management Policy* is operated in accordance with the principles of Carlow College's equal opportunities statement and *the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005*.

The aims of the *Sickness Absence Management Policy* are to:

- Treat all staff consistently;
- Maintain staff effectiveness and efficiency;
- Help retain a trained and experienced workforce;
- Advise Line Managers and staff about the need to control sickness absences and their role in this process;
- Advise on steps required of Line Managers to deal with the difficulties arising from frequent and persistent absences;
- Draw to the attention of Line Managers Carlow College's arrangements for dealing with long-term health problems;
- Clarify the role of Line Managers in relation to the welfare of their staff.

Carlow College operates a sick pay scheme for staff who are absent due to injury or ill-health. The continuing provision of the sick pay arrangements is conditional on staff members complying with this policy and co-operating with any measures to facilitate their return to work.

Line Managers have a key role in managing attendance and their responsibilities include:

- communicating the importance of regular attendance to all staff members.
- addressing issues which may be adversely affecting staff members' motivation to attend work, managing health and safety and monitoring attendance.
- ensuring compliance with the sick leave arrangements and dealing with staff members whose attendance record is unsatisfactory in a fair and consistent manner.

2. Definitions

Full net pay: basic pay (inclusive of shift premium, where applicable), less PAYE, PRSI and any other relevant deductions. It does not include any other payment.

Certified illness: any sick leave for which an employee has a medical certificate from a qualified medical doctor.

Uncertified illness: any day of sick leave for which an employee has no medical certificate. This leave may not last longer than two consecutive working days.

3. Scope of Policy

This policy and associated documents apply to all staff within Carlow College.

4. Policy Statement

Carlow College's *Sickness Absence Management Policy* demonstrates the College's commitment to staff members' health and welfare at work, specifically outlining our overall management of staff attendance. This Policy clarifies the roles and responsibilities of staff members, Line Managers and Human Resources in the effective management of attendance. It clearly sets out the functions of the Occupational Health Provider and the Employee Assistance Programme in assisting the College to support staff wellbeing. Practical guidance is provided for Line Managers on promoting a positive culture of attendance in the workplace and managing sickness absence. Comprehensive details in relation to Carlow College's sick leave arrangements are also included.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Regular attendance of staff is essential in order to deliver an efficient and high-quality service. It is very important therefore that staff members and management ensure high standards of attendance at work. This section clarifies the roles and responsibilities of staff members, Line Managers and Human Resources in the effective management of attendance. They are as follows:

5.1 Staff Responsibilities

- To provide regular and efficient service/work.
- To minimise absences arising from accidents and ill health at work by complying with the Health & Safety Statement and taking reasonable care of their own safety and that of others.

To comply with all provisions of the *Sickness Absence Management Policy* which include:

- To notify the relevant contacts (as soon as possible and as directed within the practices and procedures below) before normal/scheduled starting time.
- To maintain regular contact during extended periods of absence to keep the Line Manager advised of progress and likely date of return.
- To submit medical certificates to Leave Administration as and when required. The duration of the medical certificate must be specified and follow up medical certificates submitted on a weekly basis.
- To participate in a return to work meeting follow up with their Line Manager following each episode of sick leave absence. Please see Appendix 1.1 Return to Work Form.
- To co-operate fully with rehabilitative measures for e.g. Occupational Health to facilitate his/her return to work as soon as he/she is capable of doing so.
- To provide a fit to return work certificate from their relevant doctor on return to work when requested and required.

5.2 Line Manager Responsibilities

- To promote a positive attendance culture in the workplace by communicating the importance of regular attendance, fostering teamwork and fostering a dignity at work environment for all staff members.
- To communicate HR and/or College policies (such as *Dignity and Respect Policy* and the *Grievance Policy and Procedure*) and deal promptly with issues which may affect a staff member's motivation to attend work e.g. alleged bullying/harassment, grievances.
- To familiarise themselves with best practice management guidelines in relation to managing attendance.
- To manage health and safety (in relation to sickness absence) in the workplace.
- To ensure that staff are familiar with the sick leave procedure.
- To ensure compliance with the notification and certification requirements for e.g. ensuring that all medical certificates are provided to Leave Administration
- To ensure that where staff members take more than the ten-day limit (pro-rata for part-time employees) of certified leave (within a twelve-month rolling period), any such period will be considered an unpaid absence from work and HR and Payroll should be informed that a recoupment from salary needs to be made.
- To identify patterns and trends of sickness absence, particularly frequent and persistent short-term absences.
- To maintain contact with the staff member during extended periods of absence.
- To liaise with HR in relation to the services provided by Carlow College's Occupational Health Provider where it is believed that health related matters are affecting the staff member's work or work is affecting the staff member's health.

- To carry out a dedicated management follow up i.e. return to work meeting with the staff member after every episode of absence.
- To carry out informal discussions where the staff member's attendance record is giving cause for concern with and advise him/her of the required improvements.
- To invoke the disciplinary procedure where appropriate.

5.3 Human Resources Responsibilities

- To provide advice and support to Line Managers in the monitoring and management of sickness absence in their department/function.
- To provide training to Line Managers and staff on the practices and procedures of this *Policy*.
- To help monitor the effectiveness of the *Sickness Absence Management Policy* and ensure that it is being applied consistently throughout the College.
- To liaise with the Occupational Health Provider and Line Managers in the case of referrals to Occupational Health and advise on the implementation of recommendations arising from medical assessments.
- To collaborate with Occupational Health Providers and the Employee Assistance Programme Providers to develop initiatives to promote a safe and healthy working environment.

5.4 Leave Administration

- To administer all sick leave certificates and update the Leave Calendar with absences.
- To ensure that all sick leave certificates are stored and filed appropriately and securely.
- To ensure that only relevant personnel such as Human Resources / employee has access to sick leave certificates.
- To provide reports to Payroll, Line Managers and Human Resources.
- To work collaboratively with Human Resources and payroll in ensuring that all information is up to date and correct.
- To ensure that both Line Managers and staff adhere to the process outlined in this *Policy*.
- To answer in collaboration with Human Resources, any process/procedure related queries from staff and Line Managers

6. Associated Documentation

- Appendix 1: Sick Leave: Practices and Procedures
- Appendix 1.1: Return to Work Form
- Appendix 1.2: Employee FAQs

7. Referenced Policies

- *Employee Assistance Programme Policy*

- *Equality Policy*
- *Disciplinary Policy and Procedure*

8. Monitoring and Review

The Policy will be formally reviewed on an annual basis by the HR Office to reflect any legislative changes. Staff will be informed through regular email communication and through the staff portal regarding any updates to same.

Appendix 1. Sick Leave: Practices and Procedures

1. Introduction

Carlow College recognises that regular attendance is an essential part of the smooth running of the College and formally managing attendance can help reduce overall incidence of sickness absence. Through this policy and associated procedures, the College has put in place support arrangements for the management of sickness absence.

2. Sick Pay Scheme

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedure to be followed in absences due to sickness. A sick pay scheme is available to all employees after they have completed their probationary period (which is a minimum of six months and which may be extended at the organisation's discretion, however will not exceed twelve-months). The College offers ten days' sick leave (pro-rata) for part-time staff. It is paid at the discretion of the employer, and the College reserves the right to withhold all or part of the sick pay. Other objectives of this document and its procedures include the following:

- Treat all staff consistently.
- Maintain staff effectiveness and efficiency.
- Help retain a trained and experienced workforce.
- Advise Line Managers and staff about the need to record and manage sickness absences and their role in this process.
- Advise on steps required of Line Managers to deal with the difficulties arising from frequent and persistent absences.
- Draw to the attention of Line Managers the College's arrangements for dealing with long-term health problems.
- Clarify the role of Line Managers in relation to the welfare of their staff.

3. Eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible for the scheme, an employee must meet the following conditions:

- Have six month's continuous service.
- Have satisfactorily completed the probationary period.
- Be absent due to personal sickness.
- Payment for sick leave during probation period will not apply.

4. Types of Absences

4a. Short-Term Absence

Short-term absence is any absence for a period of time of three weeks or less. This type of absence does not normally have to have a set pattern and is usually caused by minor, in most cases, unconnected ailments.

4b. Frequent and Persistent Absence

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

- Five occasions (or more) of absence in any twelve-month rolling period (for e.g. five occasions of absence that last even just one day); or
- 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
- Where there is a pattern of absence at the same time period each year).
- Regular annual patterns of paid sick leave

4c. Long Term Absence

- Long term absence is any continuous certified absence for a period exceeding four weeks.

4d. Unauthorised Absence

- This occurs when a staff member's absence is not supported by a doctor's note (i.e. by the third day of absence);
- has not been authorised by the appropriate level of management; or
- has not been communicated to the College using the correct procedure.

There is no payment provided for Unauthorised Absences. Unauthorised absences will be addressed through the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

5. Occupational Health / Medical Examination / Company Doctor

An employer has a duty under Section 8 of the *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005* to "ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of his or her employees". The employer must, therefore, refer the employee to an Occupational Health Practitioner (OHP) for the purpose of an independent assessment where reasonable concerns exist as to the capacity of the employee to undertake his/her duties in a manner that is safe for both the employee and employer.

The OHP acts as an advisory service rather than a treatment service and has specialised training and experience. The OHP provides advice and guidance on how best to support an employee on their return to work.

It is a requirement of the sick leave scheme that all participants and beneficiaries of the scheme abide by the medical assessment of an OHP.

The employee is required to co-operate and engage with an OHP. The College reserves the right at all times to refer an employee to a medical practitioner for an independent medical examination and request a report on the fitness of the employee.

This will be done at the College's cost and will normally occur on or after a period of two week's absence and/or for frequent and/or persistent absences, however the College reserves the right to refer an employee at any time. The doctor will forward the assessment report to the

HR Office and / or Line Manager. All such reports will remain confidential. The employee will receive a copy of all such reports.

These specific reports will be retained on the employee's personnel file for a period of three years.

It is a requirement of the sick leave scheme that all participants and beneficiaries of the scheme abide by the medical assessment of an OHP. The employee is required to co-operate and engage with an OHP.

6. Return to Work

- a) The relevant Line Manager must acknowledge, after any period of absence, a staff member's return to work, even if it was just one day.
- b) This should be done utilising the organisation's *Return to Work Form* (Appendix 1.1).
- c) The staff member must also contact the Line Manager in advance of returning to work.
- d) Request staff to submit a 'Fit to Resume' doctor's note, by the resumption date, following long term sickness absence. This should be submitted to Leave Administration.
- e) The 'Fit to Resume' doctor's note should then be copied and sent to Human Resources, confirming resumption of duty. Unless a fit to resume note is produced, the staff member, depending on the nature of the work and the reason for the absence, may not be allowed to resume work until the note is produced.
- f) In any instance, where a staff member is requesting a partial return to work, notify Human Resources without delay so that relevant and appropriate arrangements can be made and discussed with the staff member.
- g) Treat all staff consistently.

7. Staff Responsibilities

- a) Staff are required to attend work regularly and to give effective service.
- b) Failure to do so is a breach of their terms and conditions of employment.
- c) Staff must adhere to absence reporting procedures.
- d) Staff must submit a doctor's note for absences exceeding two days to Leave Administration.
- e) Staff are expected to see/speak with their Line Manager (or designated person) on return from sick leave.
- f) Staff on sick leave for more than one week are expected to contact their Line Manager before they return to work.

8. HR Responsibilities

- a) While management of absence due to sickness is primarily a line management function, Human Resources will provide assistance, advice and support to Line Managers, ensuring fairness and consistency throughout the organisation.

- b) Human Resources will collate, analyse and publish departmental and organisational absence statistics.
- c) Human Resources will also in collaboration with the Line Manager, manage long-term absence and frequent and persistence absence.
- d) Where HR are in attendance and/or managing Sick Leave absences for e.g. long-term sick leave, file notes will be prepared detailing all matters discussed. All such minutes / notes / letters etc. will be kept on the employee's file and the employee will receive a copy of these notes / minutes with an invitation for them to review same ahead of filing final versions.

9. Sick Leave and Payroll Requirements

- a) Where there is a procedural breach for e.g. an employee does not submit a medical cert before the payroll date to Leave Administration, payroll will be unable to process payment for the sick leave.
- b) HR in conjunction with Leave Administration will review and audit sick leave certificates on a weekly basis.
- c) Leave Administration will provide a sickness absence report to payroll in order for sick leave payment to be allocated.
- d) It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that regular submission of same is provided to Leave Administration.
- e) When failure of submission of certificates occur, Leave Administration will notify payroll that leave is unpaid until such a time until a relevant certificate is produced.

10. Notification and Recording of Sick Leave

- a) The employee should, where possible, indicate the likely duration of the absence.
- b) The monitoring and analysis of patterns of sick leave will be managed by the Human Resources Office.
- h) A detailed statement of all sick leave absences will be supplied to each employee upon request. All requests should be submitted to Leave Administration.

11. Benefit Criteria and Social Welfare Payment

The College will pay the basic salary of the employee for a maximum of ten days (pro-rata for part-time employees) at full basic pay during any period of twelve-month rolling period.

To qualify, all absences must be notified in accordance with the stated procedures, and properly authenticated by the provision of a valid medical certificate.

Employees should apply for illness benefit within seven days of becoming ill. They should claim from the first day of illness. No payment is made by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) for the first six days which are known as waiting days. Please direct the Department to send the payment to you directly (i.e. rather than to the College).

Note:

- That illness benefit is a taxable source of income.

- The DEASP will notify the Employee of the amount of benefit which they will receive and it is the responsibility of the Employee to notify the employer (payroll) so that tax can be deducted.
- The College/Employer will treat this amount as income and tax accordingly in payroll.

12. Exclusions from Sick Leave Pay/ Benefit

Benefit may be disallowed or suspended for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Failure to provide medical certificates.
2. Late submission of medical certificates.
3. Disability arising from injury suffered as a result of failure to abide by company Health Safety rules.
4. A situation where the illness or injury originates from another paid employment.
5. Where pre-existing conditions are not disclosed at the time of a pre-employment medical (where applicable).
6. Attending / leave for Cosmetic Procedures.
7. Illness during a period of lay-off (except where the illness commenced prior to the announcement of lay-off for circumstances considered, at the College's sole discretion, to be mitigating).

13. Medical certification

Employees are required to submit a doctor's certificate to Leave Administration when absent for more than three days. Subsequent certificates must be submitted where the absence continues beyond the period covered by the initial certificate.

If the absence extends beyond one week, the employee must communicate with his or her Line Manager at least once a week to inform them of his or her medical status and likely return date. Follow up certificates should be submitted on a weekly basis to Leave Administration.

A medical certificate must include the following information, and all such information will be held in the strictest confidence:

1. name and address of the doctor
2. name and **current / updated address** of the patient
3. statement that the patient is, or was, under the doctor's care
4. the opinion of the doctor that the patient is incapacitated due to illness/accident
5. the expected duration of incapacity
6. the date of issue; and
7. the doctor's signature (a rubber stamp is not acceptable).
8. Return to work date.

14. Treatment

Where there may be a health and safety implication or risk (for e.g. having to use work machinery, driving for work etc.), an employee undergoing medical treatment for a condition, must inform the College of this treatment, especially if he or she is required to use prescription medication whilst at work.

15. Return to work

A certificate of fitness may be required before returning to work. This will normally be from the employee's own doctor but the College may require a certificate be obtained from the OHP.

15a. Meeting with your Line Manager when you return to work

All employees are required to meet with their Line Managers on their return to work following sick leave absences. A *Return to Work Form* (Appendix 1.1) must be completed, with accompanying copies of the medical certificate(s). All return to work forms must then be submitted to the Human Resources department where the form/copies of certificates will be filed on the individual's personnel file.

16. Sickness and annual leave

If an employee is sick on any day of annual leave and a medical certificate is furnished to the College for every day of illness, they may retain that leave day and take it at a later date, to be agreed as per normal annual leave notification procedures. These certificates should be submitted to Leave Administration and the employee must notify their Line Manager re same.

17. Hospital Appointments

Leave for medical appointments will be granted when the employee forwards a copy of the medical appointment letter to both the Line Manager and Leave Administration with the time and date at least two weeks in advance of the appointment. Leave Administration will then notify Payroll as to the time taken for such appointments for example if the appointment was half a day, full day, a number of hours etc.

Where this is not possible, the employee should notify their Line Manager of an appointment at the earliest opportunity. The employee must provide evidence of the appointment to the Line Manager either beforehand or afterwards. This certificate must then be forwarded by the employee to Leave Administration. If the employee is unable to provide evidence of the appointment to their Line Manager, leave such as annual leave should then be taken to cover the absence. Employees will be required to be in work where possible prior to and / or after the appointment. This is determined by the Line Manager.

Note: This leave is in addition to the ten days' sick leave (pro-rata) for part-time staff.

18. GP / Dental / Other Appointments

There is no paid sick leave for G.P/dental/other appointments. With minimum disruption to the working day, your Line Manager may agree with you that hours for such appointments are made up at another time. Confirmation of the appointment is required for e.g. G.P. / Dentist certificate / note on headed paper and /or receipt. All such appointments must be discussed and approved with the Line Manager. All such information should then be forwarded to Leave Administration.

19. Elective Procedures

Leave for elective procedures, (which are not cosmetic), will be granted when the employee forwards a copy of the medical certificate to their Line Manager and Leave Administration advising of the time and date of the procedure.

If the elective procedure is purely cosmetic, the College will require the employee to use annual leave for the surgery/procedure and for any days of recuperation necessary. The employee will also be excluded from entitlement to company sick pay for the period.

20. General Procedures

- Contact both Leave Administration and your Line Manager within half an hour of the normal starting time on the first day of absence. (Voice messages, email or text messages are not acceptable) You must speak with your Line Manager.
- Should Leave Administration be on leave, staff are required to contact Reception and their Line Manager within half an hour of the normal starting time on the first day of absence. (Voice messages, email or text messages are not acceptable) You must speak with your Line Manager.
- As it is essential that you make contact with your Line Manager, it is imperative that you know your managers and/or designates mobile / work number. This is to ensure that Line Managers and other colleagues can effectively address any immediate operational requirements.
- Leave Administration will notify Reception of your absence.
- The employee should, where possible, indicate the likely duration of the absence.
- Submit a certificate from a qualified medical practitioner on the third day of continuous absence and on a weekly basis thereafter. These certificates must be sent to Leave Administration.
- Submit subsequent certificates where the absence continues beyond the period covered by the initial certificate.
- The certificate should state how long you will be unfit for duty and the probable date of return.
- All certificates must be submitted to Leave Administration prior to payroll processing. It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure this. Late submission of certificates could possibly lead to non-payment of sick leave benefit.
- All copies of certificates should be submitted to Leave Administration.
- If the absence is prolonged beyond one calendar week, the employee must communicate with his or her Line Manager at a minimum of once a week, to inform them of his or her medical status and likely return date.
- Meet with their Line Manager/supervisor on return to work.

21. Absence Management Procedures (Short-term and Long-term Absences)

The sickness absence of staff will be monitored by their Line Managers, on a continual basis, in order to identify cases of initial concern and thereafter, cases continuing with an unacceptable level of absence and/or patterns of absence. Line Managers may decide to take

action (in consultation with Human Resources where necessary) in accordance with the appropriate procedures (outlined below).

22. Advisory Meeting (Immediate Line Manager)

This should normally be undertaken by all relevant Line Managers.

If the absence frequency/record is causing concern and/or is having a negative impact on the Department or Functional area:

- e) The immediate Line Manager should meet the staff member informally and advise of the College's concern, in terms of both the staff member's welfare, and the negative impact on their department and colleagues caused by their frequent absences.
- f) The Line Manager should be sympathetic and listen carefully to the staff member's views, and inform them of any appropriate assistance that may be available (i.e. Employee Assistance Programme; Occupational Health). The Line Manager should seek assurance about the likelihood of regular attendance in the future.
- g) If any medical condition is identified at this stage and it is likely to have an adverse effect on the individual's performance in the job, the Line Manager should ask the staff member to visit their doctor and obtain a doctor's note. If, on receipt of this doctor's note, the organisation is not satisfied for any reason with the nature or content of the doctor's note, a decision may be made for the employee to communicate further with their doctor or the organisation may seek a formal medical assessment by the OHP.
- h) Notwithstanding that the ailment may be genuine, a sustained improvement in attendance is expected.
- i) A file note should be prepared detailing all matters discussed and a review period set of one to three months. This is determined by the individual circumstances of each case. All such notes / letters etc. will be kept on the employee's file.

The outcome of this meeting must be confirmed in writing by the Line Manager who held the meeting, normally within five working days.

At the end of the review period, if there has been a satisfactory and sustained improvement the Line Manager must arrange to meet the staff member informally:

- a) The staff member will be advised that no further action will be taken at this time.
- b) S/he should be made aware that if, at any time within the subsequent twelve-month period, the length and /or frequency of absence causes concern the procedure will be recommenced at the next stage of the *Sickness Absence Management Policy* and Procedures, i.e. Disciplinary stage.
- c) A file note should be prepared detailing all matters discussed and a copy should be given to the individual.

Where regular monitoring indicates that no improvement in the sickness absence pattern has occurred the case should be referred to the next step of the procedure, i.e. Disciplinary stage.

Unsatisfactory and persistent absence, may result in the Disciplinary procedures being invoked. Please see our Disciplinary policy and procedure for further information.

23. Employee Assistance Programme

Employees may also avail of our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

The EAP is provided by VHI Corporate Solutions. The EAP is a Confidential & Specialist Information and Counselling service and is available twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. These services are also available to family members of employees.

The College does not receive information pertaining to who avails of this highly confidential service.

How can I access the EAP?

- You can free-phone 1800 995 955 or
- Email an enquiry to the specialist information service: eap@vhics.ie or
- Access the following link www.livewell.optum.com (username Vhicarlowcollege).

24. Access to Sick Leave data

The College adopts an 'open access' policy in respect of access to sick leave data / files. All staff are encouraged to contact HR, who will provide access to same.

25. Abuse of the Policy

During any period of absence from work due to illness or injury you are required to adhere to all College policies in relation to conduct including refraining from engaging in work for a competitor/another Organisation. This includes taking part in any activities that may put yourself in a situation that may extend/accentuate any illness or injury. Such behaviour may lead to loss of payments where applicable. and in some cases disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Employees found to be abusing their entitlement under this policy may suffer loss of benefit under this scheme and /or will be subject to the organisations disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Appendix 1.1 Return to Work Form

Purpose of the Return-to-Work Meeting:

To help understand non-attendance and manage an employee's return-to-work effectively, Line Managers will meet with absentees and complete a Return-to-Work Meeting.

Scheduling of the Return-to-Work Meeting:

This meeting will ideally occur on the employee's first day of returning to work (or as soon as possible thereafter).

Scope/Eligibility:

To ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach is adopted, all Line Managers have been asked to conduct Return-To-Work meetings, and complete/return the related Forms, with all employees irrespective of the length or type of absence involved.

Return-to-Work Meeting Form:

The attached Return-to-Work Meeting Form will support this conversation between the Line Manager and the employee. The completed form will then be forwarded to and retained by HR.

Main Objectives of this Return-to-Work meeting include the following:

- Welcome the employee back to the workplace.
- Confirm (or otherwise) that the employee is now fit to fulfil his/her role as before, and if/as necessary agree on an effective return-to-work plan.
- Update the employee re any temporary staffing re-arrangements that were made, and/or any organisational changes that occurred during their absence.
- Brief the employee about the current situation, highlight what tasks are now priorities, and agree where the employee should now focus his or her efforts.
- Provide an opportunity for employees to raise any ongoing medical or other work-related concerns they may have.
- Help Line Managers identify where they can assist / take action to prevent a recurrence.

All employees are asked to familiarise themselves with the Return-To-Work procedure. If you have any related queries, please don't hesitate to raise these initially with your Line Manager.

Return to Work Form

Strictly confidential

There is no minimum period of sick absence before a meeting is needed. Meetings should happen on the day the employee returns to work. Aim of the return to work interview is to:

- Bring the employee up-to-date with work reallocation, etc. during absence.
- Help Line Managers identify where they can help / take action to prevent a recurrence.

Name:	
Department:	Line Manager:
Date(s) of sick leave, (certified & uncertified):	
Last date(s) of absence:	
Total number of days:	
Time of notification of illness and to whom:	

Checklist of issues to be discussed:

How are you feeling?
Is there anything we can do to support you? (HR may be able to advise further)
<i>Where appropriate</i> , describe pattern of sick leave and illustrate the organisation's procedure.
<i>Where appropriate</i> , remind employee of requirement to reimburse social welfare payment.
Update on work during period of absence, e.g. work transferred to colleagues, new announcements, deadlines, meetings arranged, policy changes, etc.
Signature of employee: Date:
Signature of Line Manager: Date:

NOTE: This completed form should be forwarded to HR immediately after the above Meeting.

Appendix 1.2. FAQ's Employee

I'm sick, what do I do?

Contact both Leave Administration and your Line Manager within half an hour of the normal starting time on the first day of absence (voice messages, email or text messages are not acceptable). You must speak with your Line Manager.

Should Leave Administration be on leave, staff are required to contact Reception and their Line Manager within half an hour of the normal starting time on the first day of absence (voice messages, email or text messages are not acceptable). You must speak with your Line Manager.

As it is essential that you make contact with your Line Manager, it is imperative that you know your managers and/or designates mobile / work number. This is to ensure that Line Managers and other colleagues can effectively address any immediate operational requirements.

Leave Administration will notify Reception of your absence.

The contact details for Leave Administration are:

- ahayden@carlowcollege.ie
- T: 059 91 53251

The contact details for Reception are as follows:

- reception@carlowcollege.ie
- T: 059 91 53200

The employee should contact the College in person in this regard if at all possible, as it allows the College to check, where necessary, on any outstanding matters in relation to the individual's work to ensure adequate cover in the event of queries etc.

Do I need a cert?

All employees absent for two or more days must provide a medical certificate. Payment cannot be made if this cert is not provided.

Who do I give the cert to?

Medical certs for absences greater than two or more days should be sent to Leave Administration prior to your normal payroll date. Medical certificates can be posted or emailed to ahayden@carlowcollege.ie and/or Leave Administration, Carlow College, St. Patricks, College St. Carlow.

What happens when I come back from work?

Your Line Manager will complete a *Return to Work Form* (Appendix 1.1) which will then be forwarded to HR and will be filed in your personnel file.

What if I'm sick for more than 3 days?

- You must notify your Line Manager that your sickness is extended.
- You must produce a medical certificate for the remaining days of sick leave.
- All medical certificates must be sent to Leave Administration.

I've exceeded my sick leave, what happens next?

Should you exceed your paid sick leave entitlement (i.e. ten days) within a twelve-month rolling period, any absences occurred after this will be treated as unpaid, however you must continue to submit your GP/ Consultant medical certificates.

Can I use my annual leave to cover my sickness absence?

No.

Can I use any TOIL (Time off in Lieu) or any other leave to cover my sickness absence?

No.

If I have exceeded my sick leave entitlement, can I use other leave to cover my sickness absence?

No.

Can I come into work if I have been signed off by my G.P/Hospital Consultant but I feel better?

No. If you have been certified as sick by a G.P/Hospital Consultant, you cannot return to work unless you provide a 'fit to return to work' certificate. If you should return to work while certified as sick, your Line Manager will request that you obtain a 'fit to return to work' certificate before you can continue to work.

Do I have to keep in contact with my Line Manager if I'm on long term sick leave?

Yes.

- For every week absent, you must communicate with your Line Manager.
- For long term sick leave (sick leave that extends beyond four weeks), you are required to communicate directly with your Line Manager on a regular basis advising of your progress and your possible return to work.
- If you do not make contact with your Line Manager, they will contact you.
- In the event that you do not contact your Line Manager and the Line Manager is unable to make contact with you, a member of the Human Resources team will contact you.

I don't know how to claim social welfare payment, what do I do?

- Employees should apply for illness benefit within seven days of becoming ill. They should claim from the first day of illness. No payment is made by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) for the first six days which are known as waiting days.
- Employees can also obtain an illness benefit form from their G.P.
- Employees are required to submit a completed Illness Benefit form to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP), instructing that payment be made directly to yourself (i.e. rather than Carlow College).

What happens with my annual leave if I am out sick?

You will continue to accrue annual leave while you are on sick leave based on the following:

- For e.g. if an employee is on long-term absences i.e. four weeks, the College will determine when you will take this leave for e.g. ahead of you returning to work.
- The College and / or your Line Manager will request that you take this leave ahead of returning to the workplace.
- Please read below paragraph re annual leave accrual caps.

What happens if my sick leave extends into the next academic year and I still have annual leave remaining?

The amendment to the legislation re accrual of annual leave during sick leave falls under section 86(1) of the *Workplace Relations Act 2015*. It has the following effects:

- Statutory annual leave entitlement accrues during a period of certified sick leave.
- The entitlement of employees who are on long-term sick leave will be capped as leave will be subject to a maximum “carry-over” period of up to fifteen months from the end of the leave year in which it accrued.
 - For e.g. When absent on sick leave and it is not possible in the leave year to absorb all annual leave entitlements, it is permitted to carry the balance forward to the following leave year (up to a period of fifteen months.)
- Employees who resign/retire or whose employment ceases may be entitled to additional payment in lieu of their accrued leave.

1) Queries

For all queries in relation to the above, you can contact the HR Office / Leave Administration on:

- hr@carlowcollege.ie
- T: 059 91 53 293

Leave Administration

- ahayden@carlowcollege.ie
- T: 059 91 53251