

## Sickness Absence Policy

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## Introduction

Qualasept Pharmaxo Holdings Ltd and any of its group or affiliated companies (referred to in each case as “the Company”) is committed to the practice of responsible corporate behaviour and to complying with all laws, regulations and other requirements which govern the conduct of our operations.

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out what process an employee can expect from the Company if they suffer sickness or injury or if they are absent from work for other reasons.

An employee’s attendance is important to the business and is monitored. This policy identifies points at which the Company will take action if an employee’s absence reaches unacceptable levels.

The Company recognises that there will be occasions when employees are too ill to come to work as a result of physical or mental health ailments or both. The Company benefits include a Sick Pay Scheme to assist employees during such occasions and help them return to work as quickly as possible.

In addition to assisting employees to cope with periods of ill health, the Company must also remain aware of its responsibilities to its customers and will aim to carefully monitor and reduce absence levels. Payments to employees beyond the statutory minimum will be controlled to reflect these responsibilities.

Employees should be aware that Company sick pay is a discretionary benefit and not an automatic right. The provision or continuation of Company sick pay is therefore not guaranteed, any abuses of the system may result in an individual’s benefits or potential benefits under the scheme being reduced or withdrawn.

In managing sickness absence, the Company will be sympathetic in cases of genuine illness, but like all employers has limited resources. This policy is designed therefore to cope with the majority of situations, but the Company cannot undertake to support indefinitely those who need prolonged periods of time off.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to absence caused by *personal* illness or accident.

It is not intended to cover the circumstances whereby employees need to take time off work because of the illness or accident of others e.g. children or partners. The policy applicable to the latter scenario is our Special Leave Policy.

### **3. Objectives**

The overriding aim is to ensure a healthy and productive workforce and to identify and support those employees who are absent.

### **4. Status of this policy**

This policy does not give contractual rights to individual employees, and any benefits under it are entirely at management's discretion.

The Company reserves the right to alter any of its terms at any time, although we will notify you in writing of any changes.

### **5. Employee responsibilities**

You are required to contribute to good attendance by:

- being aware of your responsibility to attend work;
- following this policy, reporting absence and providing documentation as required;
- taking due care of your own health and not putting yourself and others at risk;
- taking adequate medical advice and treatment to overcome any health difficulties;
- not undertaking activity which might be detrimental to a speedy return to work or which might make your health worse;
- co-operating with your manager to achieve an acceptable level of attendance;
- not undertaking any other employment whilst claiming sick-pay;
- notifying us if you consider that your work is affecting your health or of any health problems at the earliest opportunity.

Your line manager is responsible for:

- implementing this procedure;
- maintaining a contact with you when you are absent from work;
- ensuring you follow the correct procedures;
- suggesting sources of support;
- seeking to facilitate a prompt return to work;
- where appropriate, encouraging you to seek medical advice;
- being aware of individual absence records and ensuring persistent absence is dealt with effectively.

Your line manager will consider your circumstances on an individual basis but at the same time seek to ensure the following procedures are applied consistently.

## 6. Reporting absence

If you are unable to attend work because of sickness or injury, you should telephone your manager, Supervisor or Human Resources (HR) before your shift but up to no later than 30 mins after your start time on the first morning of your absence. You should confirm the reason for your absence, likely return date, what action you are taking to mitigate the effects of the illness, e.g. visiting the doctor and where you can be contacted during the day should the Company need to get in touch with you.

Notification after 30 minutes of the start of your working day will result in the day being recorded as unauthorised absence and this will be taken into account on your Bradford Factor Score (as explained below). If necessary, your Manager/HR may return your call by 09:30 for early / day shift absence or by 12:30 for late shift absence on your home landline or personal mobile number to clarify reasons for absence.

For those who are working an early or late day, as much notice as possible should be given to your manager or person in charge to plan and arrange appropriate cover. Please ensure that you have your managers mobile number for these instances and ease of communication.

Throughout a period of sickness absence, employees must call in each day and keep their manager updated on their progress and/or any medical developments.

When notifying a manager regarding sickness absence it will not be acceptable to leave an answerphone message, to text, to email or to pass a message via a colleague as the manager will need to discuss with you the nature of your absence and whether any accident or injury has been sustained (whether inside or outside work). They may also need to make temporary arrangements to cover your work. If your manager is unavailable, you must speak to your supervisor or HR.

During any period of absence, you can expect your manager to keep in contact with you and providing that contact is made at reasonable times you will be expected to co-operate with that at all times. This may extend to home visits in the case of long-term absences or where you indicate that you are suffering from stress at work.

Your manager must notify the HR team of your absence as soon as possible after they have taken the notification phone call and update as necessary during the absence or on return to work.

## 7. Absence certification

For absences up to 7 calendar days (including non-working days) you must complete the Company's self-certification form (FAP-01). **IMPORTANT INFORMATION: Without this authorised statement no payments will be paid for the period of absence.**

If the absence lasts seven days or more (including weekends) you must forward a medical certificate (obtained from your doctor) to your manager. You must continue to obtain medical

certificates to cover the duration of your absence. The Company should receive certificates within 2 days of them being issued or as soon as practicably possible. Failure to produce medical certificates within the appropriate time will result in your absence being recorded as unauthorised and no payments will be paid

Any absence related in any way to an accident at work must immediately be reported to your manager and recorded in the accident book.

We reserve the right to require you to provide a medical certificate for absences of less than 7 days in exceptional circumstances, for example, where there is doubt over whether absence is genuine, such as where an employee was refused holiday and then took sick leave. In those cases, you will be informed, and you are likely to find your GP will charge you to provide a medical certificate.

## **8. On return to work**

On your return to work you must complete your self-certification form (FAP-01) which will be emailed to your line manager when HR has been notified of your absence. Your line manager will on every occasion that you return to work after sickness absence, irrespective of the duration of that absence, meet with you to complete this form. The purpose of the meeting will be:

- to enquire into your general health and fitness and ensure you are fit to be in work including ascertain if you are able to re-enter classified areas of Production if applicable.
- to understand any residual symptoms requiring temporary adjustments to your work or workplace;
- to indicate that the absence has been documented and properly record the reasons for the absence;
- to enquire, where necessary, into any underlying cause of the absence such as personal circumstances or workplace related factors so that reasonable adjustments can be made in the workplace where necessary;
- to certify the genuineness of the absence on a self-certification form;
- to discuss other forms of assistance or support that can be provided; and
- to update you on matters of operational interest.

Your doctor's statement will indicate whether you are fit to return to work or if there may be restrictions or recommendations for your return. Where there are such points a company will need to take these into account before agreeing for you to return to work to ensure there is no further risk to your health.

It may be that we will need to meet with you to discuss which part of your job is affected by your condition and what temporary changes to your job or hours of work or support may be necessary. The company will then consider whether such restrictions and/or

recommendations can be accommodated to allow you to have a phased return to work period or for us to agree a return to work plan.

However, if the company cannot offer you any light or alternative appropriate duties, you will have to remain off sick until you are signed back as fully fit to return to work. This will result in the GP's certificate being treated as if you have been signed off as unfit to return.

Any restrictions resulting from your absence must be imposed by a medical practitioner in writing forwarded to your line manager who will discuss your absence with you and complete the return to work meeting. This will then be passed to HR who completes the form with regards to payment and any other actions required, the form will then be kept on your personnel file. Please note that if you do not have medical restrictions imposed you will be expected to return to your regular duties.

Giving false or misleading information would be considered a disciplinary matter and could lead to dismissal.

HR enters all absences onto the Human Resources system and will chase outstanding certificates on a regular basis.

Failure to comply with any of the absence reporting procedures may result in an individual's benefits or potential benefits under the sick pay scheme being reduced or withdrawn.

## **9. Monitoring absence**

HR will update your Bradford Factor Score monthly which will highlight employees who have a high-level sickness/unauthorised absence. Bradford is a mathematical formula which recognises the impact absences can have on a business, especially where the absence has not been planned for.

The Bradford factor formula is:

$$E \times E \times D = \text{Bradford Factor Score}$$

Where E is the number of episodes of absence and D is the total number of days absent in a rolling 52-week period.

The Bradford factor will be utilised by creating "triggers" whereby certain actions will normally be taken when an employee's Bradford score reaches a certain point. These are as follows:

| Total Points    | Action  | Possible Disciplinary Action                     |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 45 - 210 points | 1 <sup>st</sup> Warning sickness letter                                 | 1 <sup>st</sup> Stage Absence Management meeting |
| 210 points      | 1 <sup>st</sup> 3 days unpaid or removal of self-certification meeting. | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Stage Absence Management meeting |
| 500 points      | Benefits withdrawn.   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Stage Absence Management meeting |

No absence is automatically covered by Company sick pay. It may be appropriate in some cases for HR to investigate a period of absence further, for example, asking you to have a medical examination or to provide a medical report, before any payment of Company sick pay can be made. In particular the Company may need to understand if there is a medical condition underlying a pattern of absence.

In reaching a decision the Company will take into account any other medication or other treatment you are receiving, the impact your job may be having, the impact of any non-job-related activities and other relevant issues.

The Company will monitor and record levels of absence and reasons for absence in order to help identify abuse of this policy, which places additional stress on your colleagues. This will also enable the Company to be better positioned to identify unsatisfactory work practices and to distinguish between different types of absence.

All information gathered through absence monitoring under this Policy will be held and treated in confidence.

To ensure consistency, HR will approve all actions and documentation.

Failure to comply with any of the absence reporting procedures may result in an individual's benefits or potential benefits under the sick pay scheme being reduced or withdrawn.

## **10. Company sick pay benefit**

There is no automatic right to Company sick pay. If the Company is satisfied that your absence from work is justified, correctly authorised and documented, your salary will continue to be paid as per your contract of employment.

Unauthorised absence will not be paid.

The duration of any paid sickness absence will generally be in accordance with your length of service with the Company. As a guideline, the maximum amount of paid sickness absence in any period of 12 months would be:

| Sick Pay:               | <u>Full Pay</u> | <u>Half Pay</u> |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 0 to 6 months           | Nil             | Nil             |
| 6 to 12 months Service  | 2 weeks         | 2 weeks         |
| 12 to 24 months Service | 4 weeks         | 4 weeks         |
| After 24 months Service | 8 weeks         | 8 weeks         |

These guidelines will be pro-rated according to the hours worked for employees on fixed term and part time contracts of employment.

Absence is counted on a cumulative basis over the previous 52-week period although the Company will also monitor your cumulative absence record throughout your employment. In the event of long-term absence due to serious illness, the amount of sick pay will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Absence not properly notified to the Company, or not covered by a self-certificate or valid medical certificate, will be regarded as unauthorised absence and will be unpaid.

**Exclusions to when Company sick pay will not be paid:**

Company sick pay **will not** be paid:

- A. For non-clinically justified elective surgery or treatment. This includes, but is not limited to, vasectomy, cosmetic surgery and IVF treatment. You would be expected to use annual leave for periods of absence in these circumstances.
- B. During any notice period.
- C. If the sickness follows the employee being issued with a Performance Improvement Plan.

However, where an employee falls into any the categories above, but the Company has evidence to show that the sickness absence is due to disability, the exclusion will not apply.

Similarly, a Managing Director or the CEO can make a decision to pay Company sick pay in the above circumstances where they believe there are overriding reasons to pay Company sick pay based on individual circumstances. A decision made in this regard must be justified and documented by the Managing Director, and saved in the HR file.



## 11. Statutory Sick Pay

The Company is responsible for paying Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), in accordance with the regulations of the National Insurance Contributions Office. The first three days of absence are 'waiting days' for which SSP is not payable.

- If your salary is being paid during sickness absence, your salary payment includes SSP entitlement
- If you do not qualify for company paid absence, you will be paid SSP for up to 28 weeks in a 3-year period. SSP payments are subject to tax and national insurance deductions.

For the purposes of calculating SSP entitlements, your qualifying days are those upon which you are regularly contracted to work and such other days as you specifically agree from time to time with the Company that you are required to work.

The Company reserves the right to refuse sick pay (including SSP) if it has reasonable cause to think that the employee is not genuinely sick, or if it has cause to believe that the employee is abusing the sick pay scheme.

## 12. Managing Long-term absence (In all cases of long term sickness refer to the HR team)

The Company reserves the right to request a home visit where the illness is long-term, i.e. 4 consecutive weeks or more or where your GP has indicated that you may be absent for that long or where you have been diagnosed with a long-term medical condition or said you are suffering from stress at work, even if you have not yet been off for 4 weeks. The purpose of the visit will be to discuss obtaining medical advice and how the Company can facilitate your return to work.

In cases of long-term sickness, a medical opinion should normally be sought in order to assist management in determining an appropriate course of action.

In these cases, the manager or HR will make contact with the employee to arrange a discussion covering:

- The absence record to date and reason for absence
- The current medical condition and progress for return as they see it
- How their condition affects their ability to do their job
- The Company's policy on sickness, how long they will be paid and the notification requirements
- The authorisation form for obtaining a medical report from the employee's GP or consultant (on receipt of the completed form HR will apply for the medical report) or referral to an Occupational Health Practitioner of the Company's choice.
- Adjustments that might be made to facilitate a phased return to work

A letter will be sent by HR to the employee confirming the discussion and seeking formal written authorisation to obtain a medical report. If you withhold your consent to the company seeking a medical report or refuse to attend an appointment with an Occupational Health (“OH”) adviser, we will have to make decisions about your absence and your health on the information available to us. It is therefore in the employee’s best interest to give permission for the Company to obtain medical information or arrange any OH meetings.

On receipt of the medical report HR will forward the report to the manager and a review meeting will be arranged with the employee to discuss the results of the medical report. The employee has the right to be accompanied to this meeting by a work colleague or trade union official (their companion). Present at the meeting will be the manager, HR and the employee and their companion (if applicable). The meeting can be held at a neutral venue or at the employee’s home if more appropriate. Possible outcomes of this meeting are

- No further action at this stage
- Further monitoring and agreement of a further review meeting
- Return to work (phased return should be considered for long term absence, i.e. return on part time hours and gradually build up to contractual hours)
- Possible redeployment i.e. transfers to another more suitable job within the Company
- Dismissal/early retirement.

Notes should be made and kept on the employee’s personnel file of the key points of these discussions.

The employee must be informed in writing of the outcome of this meeting.

Depending on the reasons for absence and the likelihood of a return to work, this process may be repeated. If it appears that it may be a long time before the employee will be able to work again the Company will discuss the situation with them and it is possible that their employment will be terminated. Should this happen the employee will receive pay in lieu of their contractual notice or statutory notice period, whichever is the longer, and any outstanding holiday pay.

The Company will consider any advice on the GP’s Fit Note which states “you may be fit for work taking account of the following advice” and look at any changes that can be made to assist their return to work.

If the absence is because of a disability, or the illness leaves the employee in a mental or physical condition which falls within the definition of a disability, the Company will make reasonable adjustments where it is able to the employee’s job to enable them to carry on working in the role they are employed in. If effective adjustments cannot be made, transfer into an alternative role or dismissal may have to take place. The employee should feel free to re-apply to join the Company once they are fit to return to work. If there is a suitable vacancy the application will be given sympathetic consideration.

### 13. Managing Short Term/ Intermittent Persistent Absences

The Company will treat as persistent absence a series of unconnected short-term illnesses. Medical advice may be required to establish that there is no underlying medical condition.

It is the responsibility of all managers and HR to manage employee absence. It is important that absence levels are regularly monitored in order to identify unacceptable cumulative levels or patterns of absence which may warrant further investigation.

In cases of unacceptable absence, the matter will be dealt with using the formal procedure detailed below.

#### Stage 1 – First Formal Absence Management Meeting

If the employee's absence persists, the employee should be invited to attend a formal "Absence Management Meeting".

If a formal meeting is required, this should be arranged at the earliest possible opportunity by the manager and HR will support by sending an invitation letter to the employee giving at least 48 hours' notice of the meeting. The meeting will be chaired by an appropriate manager, and HR will also attend to take notes. The employee has the right to be accompanied to the meeting by either a colleague or trade union representative.

At this meeting the manager will discuss with the employee the reasons for the employee's absence including any external factors which may be affecting the employee's attendance at work.

The outcomes of such a meeting may be any of the following:

- No further action at this time
- First Written Warning
- Agreement of a further review period (usually up to 3 months)
- Request for a medical/occupational health report, HR will liaise with the employee and their GP and/or consultant
- Further advice may be sought from HR, for example if a medical report would be helpful, or if a change to working patterns/ conditions should be considered further

Notes should be made of the key points of these discussions (and kept on the employee's personnel file) and the outcome communicated to the employee in writing.

#### Review Period

If during the review period, the employee does not have any further sickness absence he/she should be informed that no further action will be taken at that stage.

If the employee is absent again during the review period, the manager must decide whether it is appropriate to extend the review period or to progress to another formal meeting.

### **Stage 2 – Second Formal Absence Management Meeting**

If the employee's absence persists then the employee should be invited to a Stage 2 Absence Management Meeting. This should be arranged at the earliest possible opportunity by the manager, HR will support by sending an invitation letter to the employee giving at least 48 hours' notice of the meeting. The meeting will be chaired by an appropriate manager, HR will also attend to take notes. The employee has the right to be accompanied to the meeting by either a colleague or trade union representative.

At this meeting the manager will discuss with the employee the reasons for the employee's absence including any external factors which may be affecting the employee's attendance at work.

The possible outcomes of this meeting could be any of the following:

- No further action at this time
- Final Written Warning – this will normally be held on file for 12 months
- Further review period
- Further advice may be sought from HR, for example if a medical report would be helpful, or if a change to working patterns/ conditions should be considered further

In deciding appropriate action, the manager should consider all available information and circumstances including:

- The employee's attendance history and disciplinary record as regards absence
- The nature of the employee's role
- The employee's medical information and length of service
- The possibility of a reasonable adjustments of the job
- The availability of suitable alternative work
- The effect of the employee's future absences on the team and organisation
- Any explanation offered by the employee

Please liaise with HR for advice. Notes should be made of the meeting and kept on the employee's personnel file of the key points of these discussions.

### **Stage 3 – Final Absence Management Meeting**

If high absence levels still persist then the employee should be invited to a Stage 3 Absence Management Meeting. This should be arranged at the earliest possible opportunity by the manager. HR will support by sending an invitation letter to the employee giving at least 48 hours' notice of the meeting. The meeting will be chaired by an appropriate manager and HR will also attend to take notes and provide guidance. The employee has the right to be accompanied to the meeting by either a colleague or trade union representative.

At this meeting the manager will discuss with the employee the reasons for the employee's absence including any external factors which may be affecting the employee's attendance at work

The possible outcomes of this meeting could be any of the following:

- No further action at this time
- Extension of Final Written Warning
- Further review period
- Further medical advice or consideration if a change to working patterns should be considered further
- Dismissal

In deciding appropriate action, the manager should consider all available information and circumstances including:

- Any explanation offered by the employee
- The employee's attendance history
- The employee's medical information and length of service
- The possibility of a reasonable modification of the job
- The availability of suitable alternative work with re-training if necessary
- Could re-arrangement of duties with the team produce a more suitable job?
- The effect of the employee's future absences on the team and Company
- Weigh up the needs of the business and the rights of the employee in making a decision whether to dismiss

Notes should be made and kept on the employee's personnel file of the key points of these discussions.

If the decision is taken to dismiss the employee, they are entitled to receive pay in lieu of their notice period and any outstanding holiday pay.

#### **14. Medical Reports**

Where the Company requires medical reports relating to an absence it will either:

- Request that the employee undergoes an independent medical examination with an occupational health doctor;
- Obtain a report from the employee's doctor, subject to employee consent.

It may be necessary to obtain medical advice at several stages e.g. at the beginning of or during the course of absence, upon return to work or when SSP expires. It may also be required when you indicate that you are fit to return to work but there are concerns about whether or not that is the case.

If we require you to attend an examination by a medical practitioner, it should be regarded as positive means of establishing the degree of incapacity if any and the most effective remedy to deal with the problem. Where medical records from your GP are required to provide additional information regarding your condition, these will be obtained subject to the legislative requirements on access to medical records.

In either case you may refuse to attend or refuse to consent to the release of a medical report, or request that corrections are made. Employees are reminded however that any decision regarding their future which could result in dismissal will be taken on the basis of the information available to the Company.

#### **15. Sickness and disability**

If an employee becomes disabled in the course of their employment medical advice will be sought and in accordance with the Equality Act. It may be possible to make adjustments to the employee's job or working environment to enable them to continue in their role. Examples of such adjustments include altering the premises at which the employee works, making changes to working hours or allocating duties to other team members. In more serious situations it may be necessary to redeploy the individual to alternative work within the organisation or consider retirement on grounds of disability.

#### **16. Sickness and holiday**

If you are sick or injured while on holiday, the Company will allow you to transfer to sick leave and take replacement holiday at a later date. This is strictly subject to the following:

- You must contact your line manager in person and by telephone (if possible) as soon as you know that your holiday will be affected by sickness or injury;
- The full period of your incapacity due to sickness or injury must be certificated by a qualified medical practitioner, and
- Within 5 days of your return to work, you must confirm in writing how much of your holiday was affected by sickness or injury and the amount of leave you wish to take at another time. This written notification must be sent to your line manager.

For employees who are absent through long term sickness, holiday entitlement under the Working Time Regulations continues to accrue i.e. at a rate of 28 days per annum, this includes bank holidays. Once entitlement to full company sickness pay has exhausted the employee can book accrued annual holiday to continue to receive full pay until they have exhausted any accrued holiday.

For employees returning to work after a prolonged period of sickness absence they can consider utilising accrued annual holiday as part of their phased return to work.

Alternatively, the annual leave, if not taken, will carry forward and be available to the employee to take at a later stage – the maximum it may be carried forward for is 18 months from when it was accrued. Contractual holiday which exceeds the 28 days per annum, this includes bank

holidays under the Working Time Regulations will be lost if it is not used in the holiday year it is accrued in.

## **17. Sickness & the Disciplinary Procedure**

Should you be subject to a disciplinary investigation or process, we reserve the right, should you become absent on the grounds of ill-health, to require you to submit to a medical examination to determine if you are fit enough to work or to attend a disciplinary hearing or investigation meeting. The medical practitioner may specify reasonable conditions to be specified for such a meeting to take place, for example, they might be of the view that you are fit enough to attend a disciplinary hearing or investigation meeting but not to perform your normal duties.

If the medical practitioner states that you are fit enough to attend a disciplinary hearing or investigation meeting and you fail to do so, this may be regarded as a serious breach of contract and entitle us to terminate your employment.

You must take all reasonable steps to attend an investigatory meeting and/or disciplinary hearing.

## **18. Sickness & Grievances**

Should you become unwell whilst an investigation is pending, we reserve the right, to require you to agree to a medical examination to determine if you are fit enough to attend investigation meetings or grievance meetings. The medical practitioner may specify reasonable conditions to be specified for such meetings to take place, for example, they might be of the view that you are fit enough to attend an investigation meeting or a hearing but not to perform your normal duties.

If the medical practitioner states that you are fit enough to attend a meeting and you fail to do so, this may be regarded as a serious breach of contract and entitle us to terminate your employment.

## **19. Review**

The company will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its objectives.

Markers of success are considered to be:

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employees understand the sickness absence policy</li></ul>       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Managers know how to apply the sickness absence policy</li></ul> |