



ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR USE BY MANAGERS

IMPORTANT NOTE BEFORE IMPLEMENTING THIS PROGRAM:

Manager's wanting to apply this program within their program area or portfolio must:

- a. Attend and complete the training session on Duty to Accommodate and Attendance Management for Managers offered by Human Resources.

-or-

- b. Consult with your HR Partner on specific cases prior to initiating any steps and at each subsequent stage. The HR Partner will provide guidance at each stage and manage access to appropriate templates.

Executive Summary

The Attendance Support Program (the “Program”) was developed to assist staff in achieving and maintaining regular attendance and to provide managers with tools to address attendance concerns in a constructive manner. The Program also facilitates reasonable inquiry into potential accommodation needs under Human Rights law.

The primary goal of the Program is to facilitate and encourage regular attendance - the goal is *not* termination. The program offers a non-disciplinary approach for addressing excessive absenteeism for reasons that are beyond the staff member’s control (non-culpable). Conversely, excessive absenteeism within an employee’s ability to influence (culpable) are more appropriately dealt with through the disciplinary process.

The Program is guided by a clear set of principles that are supportive in nature and recognize the importance of regular communication. It sets out the duties and responsibilities of the various departments and players involved with particular emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of the staff member and manager.

The Program establishes five levels of attendance with Level 1 capturing the majority of staff whose attendance is acceptable. Levels 2-5 capture the more concerning cases where Absences exceed the acceptable standard. Progression through the levels in the program is not automatic and requires a fair degree of managerial review and discretion. Each Absence will involve unique circumstances that need to be considered in context. For example, an employee who is absent for an extended period due to a one-off event, such as surgery, but otherwise has good attendance will not necessarily find themselves at Level 2 of the Program. In that respect, this program requires a fair degree of managerial discretion. Managers are strongly encouraged to work closely with Human Resources when dealing with attendance concerns.

While the duty to accommodate does not relieve a staff member of their fundamental employment obligation to attend work and be productive; the University must demonstrate there is no reasonable prospect of regular attendance in spite of efforts to accommodate before it can seriously contemplate whether to end the employment relationship. An attendance program is a way to document the University’s efforts to accommodate and put the staff member on notice that their continued employment may be in jeopardy if improvements are not realized.

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PROGRAM

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1. Purpose

The University of Calgary (the “University”) depends on the contributions of its staff to create a high-quality learning environment and support the goal of becoming one of the top research universities in Canada. To achieve this, regular attendance at work is vital. The University is committed to assisting staff to fulfill their employment obligations including maintaining regular attendance through the Program. An effective Program also serves to facilitate the duty to accommodate under Human Rights law.

The University considers it important to recognize and encourage regular attendance. It also recognizes that excessive absenteeism can be disruptive and place an increased burden on others in the workplace.

This Program is intended to encourage wellness, promote regular attendance, and to support managers in dealing excessive absenteeism. The Program seeks to address non-culpable absenteeism, facilitate discussion around improved attendance and create a culture of positive attendance at the University.

NOTE: this program is not intended to require or encourage staff members to disclose confidential medical information to their managers.

2. Scope

This Program applies to Management & Professional Staff (MaPS), Alberta Union of Provincial Employees Local 52 (AUPE) and exempt-by-position staff members.

3. Definitions

- a) “Absence” means an unanticipated and unavoidable occurrence of non-attendance at work.
- b) “Acceptable standard” is the threshold number of days of non-culpable absenteeism which, if exceeded, may warrant a meeting pursuant to the Program. The current Acceptable Standard is nine (9) work days annually (does not need to be consecutive). This threshold will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.
- c) “Culpable (Blameworthy) Absenteeism” is an unauthorized Absence for illegitimate reasons or for reasons that cannot be substantiated when required.
- d) “Department” means an organizational unit that is not otherwise designated by the board as a Faculty.

- e) "Faculty" means an organizational unit as designated by the Board, and includes a non-departmentalized faculty.
- f) "Manager" means the next immediate supervisor to whom the staff member in question would normally report.
- g) "Non-culpable (Innocent) Absenteeism" is an Absence for legitimate reasons which may be supported by documentation.

4. Procedures

4.1. Guiding Principles

The University believes that:

- The University has a responsibility to provide a safe, respectful and healthy workplace;
- All staff are valued team members who contribute to the quality of service at the University;
- Regular attendance is essential to furthering the University's goals and objectives;
- Staff have a contractual obligation to attend work;
- Some Absences are unavoidable and to be expected from time to time (legitimate Absences are supported through various approved leaves such as sick leave, personal leave, family illness leave, and appointment time);

Each staff member's personal health issues are unique therefore an individual's attendance must be considered in context on a case-by-case basis;

Frequent, positive and supportive communication between Managers and their staff is critical to improving attendance and developing a culture of regular attendance; and

Maintaining regular attendance is primarily the responsibility of the staff member, however, the University recognizes it has a duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship when required and requested.

4.2. General Responsibilities

The staff member shall:

- Attend work on time as scheduled unless unable to do so for legitimate reasons;
- Make every effort to schedule personal appointments or obligations outside of work hours and obtain prior approval if they are required to be absent for a personal appointment;
- Follow established reporting procedures when they are not able to attend work, indicate the reason and expected date of return;
- Provide medical documentation to Staff Wellness when required to support an Absence;
- Seek solutions to issues that may be impacting their ability to maintain regular attendance;
- Request accommodation if required;
- Accept reasonable offers of accommodation;
- Keep the Manager and Staff Wellness informed of any changes in accommodation; and
- Provide supporting documentation to validate the need for accommodation.

The Manager shall:

- Be accountable for the attendance levels within their areas including ensuring accurate reporting and keeping appropriate records/documentation on attendance issues;
- Review absence summary reports/records on a quarterly basis (Appendix D);
- Address potential Absence problems in a timely manner;
- Clearly communicate the acceptable attendance standard to staff members;
- Provide regular feedback to staff regarding their attendance;

- Assist staff who are struggling with attendance issues to develop an action plan to improve attendance and support them in achieving the goals of their action plan;
- Maintain appropriate communication with staff who are absent from work;
- Inquire as appropriate about potential accommodation needs; and
- Seek out and offer reasonable accommodations when required in a timely manner.

Human Resources shall:

- Maintain and report data or statistics regarding attendance;
- Provide training on the Program;
- Maintain the Program along with any supporting resources and documents to support staff and Managers in fulfilling their responsibilities;
- Provide advice and support to Managers who are dealing with absenteeism issues;
- Assist the Manager and staff to understand their obligations under the duty to accommodate; and
- Assist the Manager in fulfilling their duty to accommodate.

Staff Wellness shall:

- Assist staff and managers with the administration of sick leave, disability, and Workers Compensation benefits;
- Request and manage confidential medical information when appropriate,
- Assist in the development of return to work plans;
- Act as a resource for managers and staff when a staff member is unable to attend work due to illness or injury;
- Advise the Manager whether medical information supports an Absence from work;
- Consult with Human Resources, Employee and Labour Relations as necessary.

4.3. Attendance Monitoring and Identifying Attendance Concerns

The Program provides a process for consistently monitoring and addressing excessive absenteeism. As part of this, all work areas are required to have an Absence notification procedure that is clearly communicated to the staff in that area. The procedure may vary between work areas as business needs and operations may differ. It is essential that the Manager ensure that time records for employees are accurate and up-to-date.

Managers are expected to have an awareness of attendance through regular contact with staff members and by reviewing semi-monthly timesheet approvals. It is important to stress again that most instances of absenteeism are legitimate and unavoidable. Manager's will have to exercise sound judgment and good discretion in choosing which circumstances to address.

The Manager is the primary individual responsible for managing attendance. With the assistance and advice of Human Resources, the Manager will determine whether employees need to progress through the program based on various considerations including:

- nature and duration of the absenteeism;
- number of occurrences or incidents of Absence;
- extent to which the staff member's absenteeism exceeds the Acceptable Standard; and
- treatment of other staff members with similar levels of absenteeism.

The five Levels of attendance are:

Level	Description
Level 1	Absenteeism is within Acceptable Standard. No action required.
Level 2	Absenteeism is above Acceptable Standard and suggests an emerging concern. A meeting is convened with the staff member where available supports are offered and reasonable targets for improved attendance are set. Follow-up meeting scheduled at or within three (3) months.
Level 3	Absenteeism exceeds Acceptable Standard despite concerns being identified and supports being put in place. A meeting is held with the staff member where supporting measures and attendance targets are reviewed and new options are considered. Follow-up meeting scheduled at or within three (3) months.
Level 4	Absenteeism continues to be a concern and efforts at Level 3 have failed to result in improved attendance. The staff member is given notice of a final opportunity to demonstrate improved attendance. Available supports and reasonable targets are again reviewed and a follow-up meeting is scheduled.
Level 5	Absenteeism remains excessive and attendance has failed to improve despite reasonable and documented attempts to support and accommodate the staff member to the point of undue hardship. For reasons beyond their control, the staff member is unable to fulfill the terms of their Employment contract. The Employer needs to consider whether to end the Employment relationship.

The meetings that are offered at each Level are aimed at addressing non-culpable absenteeism and are not disciplinary in nature. Attendance Support meetings with staff members in Levels 2 and above should occur at least quarterly. Staff members should progress up or down Levels based on satisfactory improvement or continued concerns. In some circumstances a staff member may maintain their Level if they have demonstrated only modest improvement and their rate of absenteeism remains above the Acceptable Standard. Following each meeting, the discussion, go-forward plan, and the staff members current Level in the Program should be confirmed in writing (templates available via HR Partners/Advisors). When a staff member's attendance has improved to the extent that it is within the Acceptable Standard, they should likewise receive a letter commending their efforts and confirming their Level in the Program.

For Unionized employees, although there is no strict entitlement to notice and/or Union representation at Attendance Support Program meetings, it is strongly recommended that reasonable notice and access to Union representation is offered at all Levels of the Program. More weight should be given to such requests the further along in the Program the staff member progresses.

5. Implementation

Step 1	HR Services to provide training to participating Managers prior to sharing the Attendance Support Program
Step 2	HR Services to confirm the Acceptable Standard
Step 3	HR Services to share the Acceptable Standard with the Managers
Step 4	Managers must communicate the Acceptable Standard in writing to staff within their area at least annually
Step 5	Managers need to be diligent and consistent in their application of the Program Levels
Step 6	HR to provide coaching and support as managers work through the Program with their staff

Appendix A

Tips and Suggested Speaking Points for Attendance Discussions

Managers need to be well prepared in order to encourage a successful discussion.

In order to be well-prepared, the manager should:

- Think about what is intended to be accomplished (e.g. raise awareness of employer concerns, help understand the cause of the Absences, identify solutions, etc.);
- Review the staff member's file and past attendance record, identify similar problems in the past, reasons, and action taken to resolve the problems;
- Develop an appropriate approach and a number of alternatives;
- Seek advice from human resources staff on key points to address during the interview;
- Set a mutually suitable time;
- Allow enough time for discussion;
- Organize all the facts and information well in advance of the interview;
- Discuss the attendance concern, avoid discussion about unrelated issues; and
- Plan for taking notes about the interview.

In any meeting with a staff member to address an attendance issue, the interview tone and setting are extremely important to the success of the meeting. It is important that the manager conducts the meeting in a respectful manner and in a tone that shows genuine concern. A tactful presentation of the issue by the manager and a request for improvement will encourage a positive staff member response and help to establish a cooperative relationship. Keep in mind that the purpose of these meetings is to raise the staff member's awareness of the attendance problem, inform them that the department is concerned, identify solutions and encourage improvement. As a Staff member progresses through the program there will be a need to advise them of potential risk to the employment relationship.

Points to make:

- Have a copy of the staff member's attendance record to review with them;
- Emphasize the University's need and desire for every staff member to be at work as scheduled;
- Identify how the Absences affect the department (morale of fellow staff members, effectiveness and productivity of work group, quality of service provided);
- Stress the requirement for improvement and clearly define expectations;
- Inform the staff member that their attendance will continue to be monitored;
- Remind the staff member that the EFAP is available to them; and
- Emphasize future improvement rather than the negative consequences and/or issues from the past.

Tone to take:

- Meet in a suitable location (e.g. privacy);
- Ensure confidentiality;
- Show respect for the individual;
- Listen carefully, put the staff member at ease (the purpose of the interview is to find a solution, not to discourage the staff member):
- Observe non-verbal communication signals and body movements;
- Use a tone of voice that demonstrates concern rather than anger or discipline;

- Control voice volume;
- Recognize that the choice of words will affect the outcome of the meeting; and
- Allow the staff member the opportunity to comment.
- Be sure to document the meeting.

Remember, unless there is evidence to the contrary, the manager always assumes that an Absence is one of **innocent or non-culpable absenteeism and therefore not subject to disciplinary action.**

Appendix B

Suggested Responses to Frequently Asked Questions

- Q. The attendance of many others is much worse than mine. Why have I been singled out for an interview when others who have worse attendance than mine have not been talked to?
- A. The Attendance Support Program applies to all staff. This meeting has been arranged to discuss your circumstances. It would be inappropriate for me to discuss the management of another individual's attendance.
- Q. I have medical certificates for every one of the days you mentioned. Don't you realize that I was sick on each one of those days?
- A. I realize you were legitimately sick on those days and I do not believe you have been abusing the sick leave policy.

However, I am concerned that you are unable to be at work on a regular basis and that your Absences have resulted in unsatisfactory attendance. Regular attendance is a requirement of your position. We are entitled to expect regular attendance from our staff members. Your Absences create staffing problems and increase the workload for colleagues. I would like to be able to provide you with support and resources in an effort to address issues preventing you from attending work regularly. If there is a medical problem, I would encourage you seek advice and resources to remedy the situation as much as possible. If you have a medical condition that may require accommodation, I want to work with you to consider ways that I may be able facilitate that.

- Q. How long will you be monitoring my attendance?

I monitor all my staff members' attendance on an ongoing basis. In addition, as a result of your attendance record, you will remain in the Attendance Support Program until you maintain an acceptable record for at least 12 continuous months depending on what Level you are at in the program.

Appendix C

Accessing Absence Summary Reports

New report available to managers of MaPS and Support Staff

What is the new report?

To further assist managers in their efforts to manage their workforce, an absence summary report is being made available to allow you to quickly look up sick leave and medical appointment Absence information for staff that report to you. You will be able to:

- Look up summary or detailed Absence information for sick leave and medical appointments of MapS and Support Staff
- Look up information using a time period you specify
- Use the information to help identify any absenteeism concerns

When is the new report available?

The report will be available Friday, September 20, 2013.

How do I access the new report?

1. After you've logged into My UofC, select "My Work", and then select "HR manager reports". This will take you into data mart.



2. In data mart, on the left-hand side select "Manager Reports" to see the complete list of reports available to you. Since the reports are listed in alphabetical order the new absence summary report will be listed at the top.

What do I do if I identify an absenteeism concern?

Contact your HR Partner or Advisor for guidance.