

Absenteeism? Take action!

INFORMATION FOR SUPERVISORS



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Absenteeism?

Take action!

Is your employee absent from work? Then you, as supervisor, have an important role. You are expected to take the lead in providing guidance, ensuring continuity in the workplace and stimulating reintegration. In short: take action!

Reminder

This leaflet is intended for supervisors and serves as a reminder.

Actions paragraphs list what you should do.

Actions others paragraphs list the key steps others are taking.

Actions you should take **with the employee** are printed in blue.

Consult the **staff website** for more detailed information about absenteeism.

Short-term absenteeism

Week 1*

Actions

- ▶ enter the employee's notice of absence in the Service Portal
- ▶ conduct a first absence interview with employee. Your questions could relate to the duration of absence, whether any appointments ought to be cancelled or handed over, which tasks the employee can still perform, how to stay in touch, and scheduling the next meeting.
- ▶ if and when absence ends: register a notice of recovery in the Service Portal.

Actions others

- ▶ employee gives notice of absence by phone.

Good to know

By law, you are NEVER allowed to ask employees about the nature or cause of their illness.



* day 1 of week 1 is the date of the notice of absence

Medium-term absenteeism

Week 2 to 6 inclusive

Actions

- ▶ contact: have regular check-ins with the employee
- ▶ check: is the absence work-related? What steps can you take?
- ▶ check: is adjusted work a possibility?
- ▶ with the employee: ask the company doctor for advice if needed, for example if long-term absence is likely
- ▶ discuss with the employee beforehand what to ask the company doctor. Make the question(s) specific and submit the online form, *Advice from the company doctor* on the staff website
- ▶ check: when is the employee's appointment with the company doctor?

Actions others

- ▶ (after 4 weeks) the employee receives a written invitation from the company doctor to schedule an appointment. This is not necessary if recovery is expected shortly.
- ▶ (after 30 days) in case of full-time absenteeism, commuting allowance is suspended
- ▶ (around 6 weeks) employee sees the company doctor
- ▶ company doctor sends *problem analysis* with reintegration advice to employee. HR adviser sends copy to supervisor.

Long-term absenteeism

Week 7 to 41 inclusive

Actions

- ▶ (week 8) **with the employee: create a *plan of action***, based on the company doctor's problem analysis
- ▶ send the plan to the HR adviser, who will forward the plan to the Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) office and PSSC
- ▶ **regularly discuss the progress with the employee**
- ▶ **with the employee: evaluate the plan and adjust it if *necessary*** (continuously: this also depends on the *problem analysis* and *consultation updates* that follow)
- ▶ is reintegration stagnating? Ask the company doctor for advice.



Week 42 to 87 inclusive

Actions

- ▷ (after week 40) ‘shake-up’ — see further on
- ▷ (week 52) **with employee: fill in the first-year evaluation**
- ▷ (after week 52) **determine with the employee and in consultation with the HR adviser whether to start *reintegration 1st track* (within Leiden University) or *2nd track* (externally).**

Actions others

- ▷ the company doctor creates an *employability profile*, which is necessary for the *vocational expert's assessment*
- ▷ vocational expert provides advice (upon request)
- ▷ PSSC informs employee about wage reduction after 52 weeks of absence
- ▷ PSSC gives 42-week notification to UWV
- ▷ UWV confirms 42-week notification
- ▷ UWV sends employee a letter regarding *the first-year evaluation*.

Week 88 to 104 inclusive

Actions

- ▶ (week 88-91) **with the employee: fill in the *final evaluation***
- ▶ send the *final evaluation* to HR adviser, who forwards the evaluation to the Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) office and PSSC
- ▶ request advice from HR adviser and company doctor
- ▶ (week 91) determine next steps (= WIA request or not)
- ▶ (after week 93) discuss the *WIA ruling* with HR adviser and company doctor
- ▶ (after week 93) **with employee: discuss the *WIA ruling* and determine next steps.**

Actions others

- ▶ the company doctor produces the *current opinion* and *medical information* documents and sends these to the employee. Only the *current opinion* is sent to the supervisor by the HR adviser
- ▶ the employee applies for WIA, with the help of the HR adviser if needed
- ▶ UWV evaluates WIA application and produces *WIA ruling*
- ▶ HR adviser takes next steps after *WIA ruling* and, in principle, concludes the term of absence.

‘Shake-up’ - after week 40

After 9 months of absence, the question invariably arises whether the employee’s current role is still fitting, given the situation. And if not, what can be done?

You may now decide to consult *the vocational expert* for advice, through the HR adviser. An objective, professional eye allows the expert to assess the absent employee’s reintegration potential. The expert offers a fresh perspective, hence the phrase ‘shake-up’.

Actions

- ▶ discuss with the HR adviser and company doctor whether or not to appoint a vocational expert
- ▶ [discuss this with the employee.](#)

Actions others

company doctor creates an *employability profile* for the vocational expert

- ▶ HR adviser appoints the vocational expert.

2nd year of absence: decision-making

In the 2nd year of absence, you make decisions about reintegration. The key question is: what is the best solution for the employee in this situation? The vocational expert's report provides guidance.

Actions

- ▷ with the employee, discuss what is possible rather than what is not
- ▷ consider various options, such as:
 - training or additional support for the employee
 - adjustments to their current role
 - reintegration into another role, within the university or externally. Liaise with HR to appoint a career coach and, if necessary, an external reintegration agency
- ▷ after consulting with the HR adviser and, if applicable, the company doctor, make agreements and evaluate regularly.



2nd year of absence: more about WIA

In some cases, it is necessary to apply for Work and Income Act (WIA) benefits. The employee is to arrange the application with UWV. UWV evaluates the application, focusing on whether you, as employer and employee, have done enough to achieve reintegration. If not, UWV may impose wage sanctions.

Actions

- ▶ (week 88-91) ensure the employee schedules an appointment with the company doctor to obtain the *current opinion* and *medical information* documents for UWV
- ▶ **with employee: fill in the online form, Advice from the company doctor** to take to the appointment with the company doctor
- ▶ (after week 93) discuss WIA ruling with HR adviser and company doctor
- ▶ (after week 93) **with employee: discuss WIA ruling and determine next steps.**

Actions others

- ▶ (week 88-91) the employee schedules an appointment with the company doctor
- ▶ company doctor produces *current opinion* and *medical information*, as necessary for WIA application
- ▶ (after week 91) company doctor sends *current opinion* to both supervisor (via HR adviser) and employee. The employee also receives the *medical information* document
- ▶ employee applies for WIA, if needed with the help of the HR adviser
- ▶ UWV evaluates WIA application and sends results to Leiden University and the employee
- ▶ PSSC ensures the company doctor also receives the *WIA ruling*
- ▶ HR adviser takes next steps after *WIA ruling* and concludes the term of absence
- ▶ a resignation request through UWV requires a *prognosis* document from the company doctor.

Early WIA

If the company doctor confirms the employee will never be able to work again, he or she may be eligible for early WIA. Application is possible **after 3 weeks of absence up until and including 68 weeks of absence** (1 year and 3 months). The employee can apply for early WIA only once.

Action

- ▶ inform the employee about the possibility of early WIA.

Actions others

- ▶ company doctor gives advice about applying for early WIA
- ▶ employee applies for early WIA, if needed with the help of HR adviser.



Frequent absenteeism

If an employee is regularly absent (3 or more times a year) for short periods of time, this is referred to as frequent absenteeism. It can be a sign or preliminary stage of long-term absenteeism.

Actions

- ▶ talk to the employee as soon as they return to work
- ▶ make sure to have all relevant information at hand (i.e. dates and frequency of absence)
- ▶ indicate that absence is frequent and ask: “Can these absences be prevented in future, and what do you need for that to happen?”
- ▶ together, make agreements accordingly.

Division of roles in case of absenteeism

Absenteeism: supervisor and employee are both responsible

Leiden University strives for maintaining a productive staff. Health, safety, vitality and the prevention of absenteeism are therefore paramount. Absenteeism also relates to choices and behaviour. Absence interviews are not focused on the employee's ailments, but on what they can do and what they need. In this process, the employee and supervisor are both responsible. Key advisers are the HR adviser and company doctor. In sum: each has a role to play and corresponding responsibilities.

Role of the **employee**



The employee strives for recovery and reintegration. Make clear what you expect of them. The employee:

- ▶ stays in touch with the supervisor and honours agreements
- ▶ thinks about the tasks they can still perform
- ▶ seeks advice from the company doctor if needed, preferably in consultation with the supervisor
- ▶ schedules the appointment with the company doctor and informs supervisor about this
- ▶ actively works on recovering and reintegration
- ▶ strives for 'sustainable employability'
- ▶ is open to another applicable role if they are temporarily or permanently unable to fulfil their current role.

Role of the supervisor



As supervisor, you are the active case manager who takes initiative. How do you perform this leading role in practice?

- ▷ show genuine interest in the employee
- ▷ keep yourself well-informed
- ▷ stay in touch with the employee and make agreements with specified timelines
- ▷ together with the employee: request advice from the company doctor early on
- ▷ remain open, clear, and respectful during conversations
- ▷ focus on what someone can do
- ▷ ensure the employee can perform these tasks or that role well
- ▷ ensure complete and up-to-date documentation, containing the *problem analysis*, *plan of action*, evaluations, and adjustments
- ▷ ensure you/Leiden University always comply with all legal requirements regarding absenteeism
- ▷ do not report medical information anywhere!

Role of the HR adviser



The HR adviser takes a counselling, supporting, and monitoring position. Duties include:

- ▶ providing information and advice about regulations, the reintegration process, employment conditions, career, role, conflicts, etc.
- ▶ monitoring the reintegration file (especially in case of long-term absenteeism)
- ▶ facilitating communication between supervisor, employee, and company doctor, if needed
- ▶ coaching in meetings between supervisor and employer, if needed
- ▶ advising the employee in finding a different role, with Leiden University or another employer.

Important:

Seek advice! Are you unsure? Are there complications? Is reintegration stagnating? Ask the HR adviser for help or advice!

Role of the **company doctor**



The company doctor is a specialist and advises employees and supervisors during absenteeism and reintegration. Predominantly, he or she:

- ▷ determines the employee's possibilities and disabilities medically
- ▷ gauges the duration of absence
- ▷ provides advice about recovery, reintegration, and prevention
- ▷ gives referrals to other practitioners, such as the company social worker or psychologist
- ▷ provides advice during absenteeism & reintegration meetings — also about prevention
- ▷ provides advice about reactivating stalled reintegration
- ▷ composes the *problem analysis*, *employability profile*, *current opinion*, and *medical information*.

Important:

- **Patient confidentiality!** The company doctor is subject to doctor-patient confidentiality and may **NEVER** share an employee's medical information with the employer, which includes you, as supervisor. Employees are always free to consult their medical file.
- **Seek advice!** Are you unsure? Are there complications? Is reintegration stagnating? Ask the company doctor for help or advice, for example during phone consultation hours.

Role of the **vocational expert**



In case of absenteeism, you can also consult a **vocational expert**. The vocational expert assesses opportunities for the absent employee's reintegration. In this process, the expert uses all available information, such as the employee's job specification and CV, the *problem analysis* and *plan of action*, intermediate evaluations, and the *employability profile*. Only appoint a vocational expert after consultation with the HR adviser and the company doctor.

Remember:

- ▶ start building the reintegration file (*plan of action*) early on and keep it up-to-date
- ▶ actively stay in touch with the employee
- ▶ make agreements with the employee and ensure these agreements are honoured
- ▶ always focus on what someone can do (ill is not the same as unfit for work)
- ▶ ask the HR adviser and company doctor for advice early on
- ▶ never share medical information.



Summary

day 1	notice of absence
week 1-2	employee interviews and employability agreements
week 2-5	if needed: seek advice from company doctor together
week 4	employee receives letter: schedule appointment with company doctor
day 30	suspend commuting allowance
week 6	<i>problem analysis</i> (company doctor)
week 8	<i>plan of action</i> (supervisor and employee)
from week 9	regular evaluations with respect to the <i>plan of action</i>
from week 40	'shake-up,' possibly with vocational expert assessment
week 42	42-week notification to UWV (by PSSC)

week 46-52	<i>first-year evaluation</i> (supervisor and employee)
from week 52	employee wage reduction of hours not worked
from week 53	make decisions about reintegration + possibly: start 2 nd -track reintegration (external)
week 68	application deadline early WIA
week 88-91	<i>final evaluation</i> and possibly, WIA application (using employee file, including <i>current opinion</i> and medical information from company doctor)
week 98-104	decision on dismissal, based on UWV's WIA ruling (do not forget company doctor's <i>prognosis</i>); conclude period of absence.

Want to know more?

On the **staff website** you will find more information, such as:

- ▷ document, *Views on absenteeism*
- ▷ document, *What does the company doctor do?* And link to UWV brochure, *I am ill*
- ▷ *2020 ZANU Regulations* (Sickness and Disability Scheme of Dutch Universities - Dutch only).

Attend a training session or workshop

Leiden University offers training, information sessions, and workshops on absenteeism.

You can find the current offer on the **staff website**.

Explanatory note

The outline of this leaflet roughly follows the steps of the 'absence process' according to the *Eligibility for Permanent Incapacity Benefit (Restrictions) Act*. Its contents are a practical translation of the *Views on absenteeism* document, found on the **staff website**.

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