



Aquatic Control Engineering

# Sickness and Absence Policy

Date Reviewed: 04/09/2023

Next Scheduled Review: 04/09/2024

This policy sets out our procedures for reporting sickness absence and for the management of sickness absence in a fair and consistent way.

Sickness absence can vary from short intermittent periods of ill-health to a continuous period of long term absence and have a number of different causes (for example injuries, recurring conditions, or a serious illness requiring lengthy treatment resulting in time off work.)

Where needed and reasonably practicable, measures will be taken to assist those who have been absent by reason of sickness to return to work.

We may vary the procedures set out in this policy, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case.

### **Reporting Procedure**

Should you be unable to attend work due to illness or injury, you must comply with the following sickness absence reporting procedure.

If you are taken ill or injured at work, you should report to a manager and be given permission to leave work. Managers should contact the HR Advisor to make arrangements for anyone who is unwell to be accompanied home or to receive medical treatment where necessary.

If you cannot attend work because of an illness or injury, you must personally contact your line manager as soon as possible and no later than one hour after your normal start time. If you are unable to speak to your line manager, you must speak to either the HR Advisor or the Managing Director. Email and Text Message is unacceptable, as is contact through social media websites, online or mobile phones instant messaging facilities, you must speak to them directly via telephone call, where it is possible.

You should outline the following details:

- a) The nature of your illness
- b) Indicate the likely length of absence
- c) Contact details
- d) Any outstanding or urgent work that needs attention

It is unacceptable for a third party to contact us on your behalf to report your sickness absence, other than in exceptional circumstances (for example, where you have been unexpectedly admitted to hospital and/or you are not in a position to make the telephone call yourself.)

For periods of absence longer than 2 weeks, you should expect to be contacted during your absence by the HR advisor who will want to enquire after your health and be advised, if possible, as to your expected return date.

If you have been suffering from an infectious or contagious disease such as measles or chicken pox, or a pandemic virus, you must not report for work until you are medically fit to do so.

The Company reserves the right to send an employee home if, for any reason, they appear to be unfit for work or appear to present a risk to themselves, the workplace, other staff members or third parties.

These are precautionary measures designed to prevent the spread of disease in the workplace and / or further harm to the employee or others.

### **Evidence of Sickness**

You must always provide medical certificates (either self-certification of sickness absence forms or doctors certificates) to cover the entire period of your sickness absence.

For an absence of seven consecutive calendar days or less, you are required to telephone your line manager on a daily basis in accordance with the reporting procedure set out above.

We may relax this requirement in exceptional circumstances, for example, in the case of a pandemic virus affecting a large percentage of our employees. You will be advised about any modified sickness absence reporting requirements at the appropriate time.

You must complete a self-certification of sickness absence form immediately on your return to work. Self-Certification forms are available from your line manager and the HR Advisor. In line with GDPR, all sickness records will be kept with the employee personal folder only.

For absences of more than one calendar week, you must obtain a certificate from your Doctor (Statement of Fitness for Work) stating that you are not fit for work and the reason(s) why. This should be forwarded to the HR Advisor as soon as it is obtained.

If your absence continues, further medical certificates must be provided to cover the whole period of absence.

You are also required to contact your line manager on a weekly basis in order to provide an update on your illness or injury.

If your doctor provides a certificate stating that you “may be fit for work” you should inform the HR Advisor and your line manager immediately. Your line manager will discuss with you any additional measures and ways to help you get back to work, such as phased return to work, altered hours, amended duties or workplace adaptations. The various options will be discussed with you and if a return to work is possible, your line manager will agree with you a return-to-work date, any temporary adaptations or adjustments that are to be made and for how long and will set a date for review. If appropriate measures cannot be taken, you will remain on sick leave and we will set a date to review the situation.

The company reserves the right to obtain further medical evidence, as adjustments to help you return to work; your line manager will explain the reasons for this to you and will set a date for review.

Where we are concerned about the reason for absence, or the level of frequent short-term absence, we reserve the right to request a doctor’s certificate for each period of sickness absence regardless of duration. If you incur a fee in relation to obtaining a doctor’s certificate, we will reimburse it upon the production of a receipt.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absence is a serious disciplinary matter and will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary & Grievance Policy & Procedure. Depending on the circumstances of the case, it may amount to potential gross misconduct rendering you liable to summary dismissal.

Absence that has not been notified according to the sickness absence reporting procedure and you do not have a legitimate reason for your absence, will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised absence also includes cases of failing to return to work on time from a period of annual leave or other approved leave of absence without reasonable excuse and cases where you purport to take a period of annual leave that has not been approved in advance by your line manager, or the Managing Director.

If you do not report for work and have not telephoned to explain the reason for your absence, your line manager will attempt to contact you by telephone and will keep a record of this. If your line manager is unable to make contact with you, they may attempt to contact your listed emergency contact or next of kin. This should not be treated as a substitute for reporting sickness absence.

If you have failed to make contact with your line manager by the second day of your unauthorised absence and we have been unable to make satisfactory contact with either you or your emergency contact or next of kin, your line manager will write to you setting out that you are absent from work without permission and the attempts that have been made to contact you. You will be asked to contact us as a matter of urgency and you will also be warned that unauthorised absence without good reason is a serious disciplinary offence which could result in disciplinary action being taken against you.

If you continue to be absent from work without permission, disciplinary proceedings will be instituted against you and this could result in your summary dismissal from employment, following the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy & Procedure.

Where you do make contact with your line manager and arrangements are made for you to return to work, in the absence of either a legitimate reason for your absence and/or a satisfactory explanation for your lack of contact, you will still be subject to disciplinary action in relation to either your period of unauthorised absence and/or your failure to follow our absence reporting procedures. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, again this could result in your summary dismissal from employment.

### **Managing different types of sickness absence**

Aquatic Control Engineering monitor and record sickness absence in line with Employment legislation and The Health and Safety at Work Act. ACE will track absences within the calendar year for each individual employee.

### **Occasional Short-Term sickness absence**

Although everyone prefers to be well rather than sick, occasional short-term sickness may affect you from time to time. At our discretion, a return-to-work interview may be held in conjunction with the Self-certification sickness and absence form.

### **Regular Short-Term Sickness Absence**

If your sickness absence reaches unacceptable levels, typically more than four times in any one calendar year, we may refer you to the disciplinary procedures as outlined in our Disciplinary and Grievance Policy. Having followed the disciplinary procedures, if your absence continues and is causing staffing problems, low morale or otherwise significantly and adversely affecting our business this may result in dismissal under the disciplinary procedure.

### **Long Term Sickness Absence**

Where an employee suffers with a disability as diagnosed by their doctor or recognised authority, we will make “all reasonable efforts” to assist the employee to return to work if medically advisable including:

- Reasonable adjustments to the workplace and equipment
- Consider reasonable applications for transfer to alternative work
- Make arrangements for specific colleagues to assist with tasks where required
- Considering the viability of flexible working patterns such as, part time working with extra or more flexible rest breaks. However, pay will be reviewed and may be reduced in such circumstances.

We may dismiss you on grounds of incapability, whether or not you suffer with a disability if:

- We have made “all reasonable efforts” to assist a return to work and
- A return to work is not possible for the foreseeable future and
- We can show that we find it difficult to manage without your regular attendance to cover the job in question

### **Sick Pay – Outlined in your Contract of Employment**

If owing to illness or injury, you are absent from work during the first three months of your employment, you will not be entitled to sick pay. Your entitlement to sick pay will not start until you have completed three months service, excluding periods of absence because of sickness.

You will be paid your full salary entitlement less the amount of any Statutory Sick Pay or Social Security sickness benefit to which you may be entitled for an aggregate period of 12 weeks in any calendar year during the first two years of employment.

Payments of salary for any further period of absence in any period of twelve months will be entirely at the Company’s direction. If at any time you have received the full amount of sick pay for which you are eligible under these conditions you will not be entitled to receive any further sick pay until you have returned to work for a further period of three months.

The Company reserves the right to withhold the Company sick pay where you have failed to comply with the reporting procedure described above or where there is sufficient reason to doubt the validity of your sickness absence claim. In the latter circumstances, we may request you to undergo a medical examination by a doctor selected by us.

The Company reserves the right to withhold sick pay if your illness or injury is, in the company’s opinion, after obtaining such medical advice as it considers necessary due to:

- a) Influence of alcohol or drugs (except where taking under medical advice)
- b) Taking part in professional sport without prior written approval by the Company OR
- c) Taking part in riots or civil commotion

### **Keeping in Contact during Sickness Absence**

If you are absent on sick leave you should expect to be contacted from time to time by your line manager, in order to discuss your wellbeing, expected length of continued absence from work and any of your work that requires attention. Such contact is intended to provide reassurance and will be kept to a reasonable minimum.

If you have any concerns while absent on sick leave, whether about the reason for your absence or your ability to return to work, you should feel free to contact your line manager.

### **Medical Examination**

For long-term sickness absence, or frequent periods of sickness absence, we may request a medical report from your GP or consultant or alternatively request that you visit a doctor selected by the Company to undergo a medical examination.

The cost of any such report or examination will be met by the Company and you are required to co-operate in the obtaining and disclosure of all results and reports to the Company.

### **Return to Work Interviews**

For all periods of sickness absence of 7 calendar days or longer, your line manager will require you to attend a "return to work" discussion on your first day back (or as soon as possible thereafter.)

The purpose of the return to work interview is to discuss your absence and to give you an opportunity to raise any concerns or questions or to bring any relevant matters to our attention.

Where your Doctor has provided a certificate stating that you "may be fit for work" we will usually hold a return to work interview to discuss any additional measures that may be needed to facilitate your return to work, taking account of your Doctor's advice.

In the case of frequent or repeated absences, your line manager will discuss whether there are any underlying reasons for the regular absences (in particular, whether they are in any way work-related) and explore with you whether there is any apparent pattern of absence.

You may also be set reasonable targets and time limits for improvement in your attendance and be warned that a failure to improve may result in disciplinary action.

For long-term sickness absence, your line manager may request to visit you at home to see if there is anything that we can do to assist you with a return to work. You are under no obligation to agree to this type of request.

Persistent short-term sickness absence is, in the absence of any underlying medical condition or other reasonable excuse, a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with in accordance with our disciplinary & grievance policy & procedure. If it is subsequently discovered that your sickness absence was not genuine, this will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Signed:



Stephen Randall  
Managing Director