

Sickness absence policy

Sickness Absence Policy

At Acuiti Labs, we are committed to the health, safety, and wellbeing of our employees. We aim to encourage employees to maximise their attendance at work whilst recognising that, from time to time, colleagues may be unable to come to work due to ill health.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the approach to managing sickness, ensuring consistency and fairness across the business within Acuiti Labs.

Scope

This policy provides guidance on our sickness absence procedures. This policy applies to all employees of Acuiti Labs.

Absences for temporary agency workers are not within the scope of this policy and should instead be reported to the agency that has supplied the worker to the business.

Contractors do not qualify for any of the paid leave scheme but should follow the absence reporting procedure set out in this policy.

Acuiti Labs are committed to promoting employees' health, safety and wellbeing by:

- Providing appropriate support to proactively prevent absence due to ill health wherever possible
- Addressing issues which may result in absence due to work related stress
- Encouraging attendance, monitoring absence and the cost of sickness absence
- Providing coaching and training for managers dealing with sickness absence issues
- Providing appropriate support to facilitate employee return to work after illness

Sick Pay

Sick pay is paid to employees in accordance to the country specific obligations which can be found in the relevant appendix.

Enhanced Sick Pay

Following successful completion of the probationary period, should an employee be temporarily incapacitated due to ill health or injury, they may be entitled to receive an enhanced Sick Pay at the discretion of the Company, subject to the provision of satisfactory medical certification and compliance with this policy.

The details of any applicable enhanced sick pay entitlement and legal sick pay entitlement can be found in the country specific appendix.

Enhanced sick pay will not be paid if an employee commences sick leave whilst under investigation for a disciplinary matter or during the disciplinary or performance process, or if an employee is in their notice period.

Medical Appointments

Time off for medical appointments is not covered by this policy, and any time out from work for this reason should be pre-authorised by the Reporting Manager and taken as either annual leave or unpaid leave or, for short periods of time out of work, employees may be asked to work the time back.

The arrangements for maternity/paternity-related healthcare appointments can be found in the Family Leave Policy.

Sickness of a Dependent

This Policy does not cover the illness of a dependant, where employees may require time off to look after a relative, family member or other dependant. Leave for dependants should be taken either as emergency holiday or unpaid leave, with the agreement of and discretion of the HR department.

Independent Occupational Health Assessment

Occupational Health refers to the services, programs, and practices designed to support the physical and mental health of our workforce in relation to the work they perform. It plays a critical role in helping manage sickness absence and ensuring employees are fit to work safely and effectively.

Occupational Health may include, but is not limited to:

- Independent medical assessments in cases of long-term or frequent sickness absence
- Support in return-to-work planning following illness or injury
- Assessments related to workplace adjustments or accommodations (e.g., ergonomic needs, phased return)
- Mental health and wellbeing assessments
- Guidance on fitness for duty, particularly in safety-sensitive roles

In line with local laws and best practices across the US, UK, India, and the Netherlands, Occupational Health services may be facilitated through external accredited providers. Participation in Occupational Health assessments may be required in certain cases, and will always be conducted with respect for confidentiality, medical ethics, and data protection regulations such as HIPAA (US), GDPR (EU/UK), and relevant Indian legislation.

Occupational Health does not replace an employee’s personal healthcare provider but serves as a supportive, work-focused health function to promote wellbeing and sustainable performance at work.

Standard Sickness Procedure

For all cases of sickness, the employee and Reporting Manager should refer to and follow the prescribed guidelines below:

	Employee	Reporting Manager/Project Manager
Day 1 of sickness	<p>Employees should notify their Reporting Manager of any sickness no later than 30 minutes before the usual start time.</p> <p>Absence should be reported by telephone, unless the Reporting Manager is unavailable, employees should contact the HR department.</p> <p>Email and text message are not an acceptable form of reporting absence.</p> <p>Any absence must be reported by the individual, unless there are exceptional circumstances for the absence (e.g., emergency hospitalisation).</p>	<p>Upon receiving confirmation of sickness, the Reporting Manager should gather details of the sickness, including the reason for the absence, likely return date and any other details that may be relevant to the sickness.</p> <p>At this point, the Reporting Manager will also create an open-ended sickness record in the Keka and may contact a member of the HR team if further guidance is required.</p>

	<p>Should an employee fall ill partway through a working day, they should inform their Reporting Manager prior to leaving the office.</p>	
Day 2+ of sickness	<p>Should the sickness last more than one day, employees are expected to contact their Reporting Manager to report continuing sickness.</p>	<p>If the sickness is likely to be longer, the Reporting Manager will agree timescales with the employee to keep in contact to monitor sickness and return to work. HR department should be notified at this stage.</p> <p>The Reporting Manager will make the necessary arrangements to ensure continuity of business such as arrange for out of office automated reply on emails or temporary access to emails.</p>
Day 7+	<p>Ordinarily, any sickness over 7 calendar days must be supported by a medical certification from the doctor or an appropriate form issued by a hospital.</p> <p>It is the employees' responsibility to supply this information to the HR department without prompting.</p> <p>Unless there are extenuating circumstances, any sickness not supported by a doctor's note will not be paid.</p>	<p>The Reporting Manager will continue to keep in regular contact with the employee and must discuss any ongoing absence confidentially with the HR department. The Reporting Manager will send any medical certification to the HR department.</p>

<p>Upon returning to work</p>	<p>Upon returning to work, employees should complete a self-certification form in Keka in order to cover up to the first 7 days of sickness period.</p>	<p>Upon return from a period of absence, the manager will:</p> <p>Close the absence record in the Keka Hold a return-to-work meeting with the employee</p> <p>If the employee has hit a sickness trigger, a separate meeting should be arranged to discuss the details further</p>
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Exceptions to the Standard Sickness Procedure

There are some exceptions to the standard sickness procedure in certain circumstances:

Contagious medical conditions – Employees have an obligation to inform their Reporting Manager and a member of the HR team immediately if they know or suspect that they have a contagious medical condition or disease. Acuiti Labs reserve the right to act on such information which may include, but is not limited to, conducting risk assessments and precautionary health and safety measures such as sending the employee home and informing others at risk.

Sickness absence during annual leave - If an employee falls ill during an agreed period of annual leave, the time will only be treated as sickness absence on provision of a valid medical certification and/or written confirmation of hospitalisation. This obligation is regardless of the length of absence.

Unauthorised absence – Should an employee be absent from work due to illness or another reason and does not have extenuating circumstances for failing to report the absence, in accordance with the procedure detailed above in section 8, they will be considered absent without leave (AWOL). Any employee deemed AWOL will automatically forfeit any right to payment for the unauthorised absence until their return to work and may be subject to the company’s disciplinary policy.

- a) If an employee is deemed to be AWOL they will be contacted by phone and in writing by Acuiti Labs, requesting for them to make immediate contact. Failure to make contact with the Company may lead to disciplinary action being taken which may result in the termination of employment.

- b) If, the employee still does not make contact with the Company, and in the absence of any extenuating circumstances, we reserve the right to terminate the contract of employment due to the continued repudiation.

Return to Work Meetings and Adjustments

After any period of absence (irrespective of length), Reporting Managers will 'check-in' with the employee once they return to work. If the absence is for a longer period or there are repeat occurrences, the manager will conduct a return-to-work discussion with the employee. Where possible this will be held on the first day after return from sickness absence. The length and nature of absence will determine the content and duration of such discussions.

The general purpose of the discussion is to:

- Welcome the employee back to work
- Ensure the employee is fit and able to return to work
- Determine the cause of absence and discuss any relevant issues
- Ensure that the correct certification process has been followed
- Understand if any further wellbeing support or reasonable adjustments are required
- Update the employee on any work-related matters that have arisen during the absence.

Where an employee has been absent for a prolonged period of time or has taken multiple absences due to an ongoing condition, the return-to-work meeting will focus on potential adjustments to work, if these have not already been discussed during the absence. These adjustments may include:

- A phased return to work (reduced hours as a temporary measure)
- Reduced working hours (a permanent reduction in working hours and associated salary based on medical advice)
- Change of duties and/or alternative role
- Specific training to refresh the employee's knowledge or skills following a prolonged period of absence

In regard to a phased return to work, timescales will be agreed prior to the commencement of the phased return. Where a phased return is extended, any unworked normal hours will be unpaid or covered by any remaining CSP. If at any point during the phased return it becomes clear that the employee will be unable to return to their full contractual working hours, the position will be reviewed in full by the COO and HR, in full consultation with the employee.

Sickness Triggers and Absence Review Meetings

Reporting Managers will discuss any higher than normal levels of absence taken and the reasons for this with employees.

In addition to return-to-work meetings, additional absence review meetings will be instigated where any of the below sickness triggers are hit:

- 5 days and/or 4 occasions of sickness within a rolling 12-month period
- Any additional periods of sickness above 4 occasions within a rolling 12-month period
- Any additional sickness whilst there is a live disciplinary warning on file, or as outlined in a previous disciplinary warning issued.
- Noticeable patterns of absence that may be considered out of the ordinary

Should an employee hit one of the above triggers, the Reporting Manager will conduct an absence review meeting to discuss the absence record. A member of the HR team may be present during the meeting if requested by either the Reporting Manager or employee. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Discuss and understand any potential underlying medical reasons for the absence
- Enable the Company to identify any support or advice required by the employee
- Encourage improved attendance

Possible outcomes of the meeting may include:

- An informal discussion which will be followed up in writing to either confirm the absence was deemed reasonable or with expectations of how absence could be improved
- A request to access to medical records to obtain further advice should the reasons for absence be linked to an underlying medical condition
- A referral to occupational health in order to allow the business to better understand how to support the employee if the absences are linked
- A disciplinary warning (written or final written depending on the severity of the absence) along with written expectations of how absence should be improved over a set period, usually 6-12 months.
- In serious cases where no improvement in absence levels has been shown despite previous warnings, dismissal for poor attendance, in line with the disciplinary policy.

Long Term Absence Due to Sickness

The Company classifies long term absence as 4 calendar weeks or more of continuous absence from work supported by a medical certification. Employees may also be classified as on long-term absence prior to 4 weeks if a fit note is provided that states that the employee will be absent for a lengthy period. Where this is the case, the Reporting Manager will ensure that the HR team is aware of the long-term absence and will begin discussions regarding next steps to help the employee's recovery and eventual return to work.

During any period of long-term absence, Reporting Managers will continue to keep in contact with the employee as per the guidelines above, but with support from HR department will also consider:

- Requesting access to medical records or for the employee to attend an occupational health appointment
- Arranging a sickness welfare meeting either in our offices, virtually or at the employee's home to discuss the absence in further detail and consider additional steps that the Company may be able to take in order to support a return to work.
- Investigating a change in working hours or role (if suggested by a medical professional) for the employee to return to work in a reshaped or reduced capacity.
- Liaise with our critical illness insurance provider, if applicable, in order to assist rehabilitation.

A plan will then be mutually agreed between the employee, Reporting Manager and HR to facilitate a return to work within a reasonable timeframe. The plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains relevant and achievable.

If at any point during the long-term absence, it becomes apparent that the employee is unlikely to be able to return to work in any capacity within a reasonable timeframe previously set out in the return- to-work plan, the company reserves the right to consider terminating the contract due to ill health.

We will look to exhaust all other reasonable options and recommendations from medical professionals before reverting to potential dismissal.

Access to Medical Records and Occupational Health Appointments

Dependent on the illness, a medical report may be deemed necessary to identify any modifications to duties or workstation / office that may have to be made. If it is deemed necessary to further understand the causes of absence, the employee will be asked to give their consent to the Company obtaining a medical report on the employee's current state of health. The HR team will make the relevant forms available for the employee to complete.

Subject to employee consent, we will either arrange an independent medical examination/referral to an Occupational Health Adviser and/or approach the doctor and/or Specialist for a report. Examinations and reports will be paid for by the Company. We will ask the medical practitioner for their opinion regarding the illness/condition, possible length of absence (if linked to a long-term absence), likely date of return (if linked to a long-term absence), an indication of the type of work the employee may be capable of performing and advise on any reasonable adjustments we can introduce in order to assist the return to work.

We will seek to obtain details about the employee's state of health only when that information is considered essential for employment purposes and in order for us to meet our duty of care and legal obligations. Where medical reports are deemed necessary, the employee will be consulted prior to any report being requested. They will be fully informed of their rights of access to any such reports.

All medical reports are treated as strictly private and confidential in line with our Data Protection Policy.

If an employee refuses to consent to a medical report being obtained, they may be notified in writing that any future decisions about their continued employment will be taken on the basis of the information available to us.

Sickness Linked to Disabilities

We acknowledge that employees who have a recognised disability (the legal definition being 'a mental or physical impairment', 'which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect' on the employee's ability to carry out 'normal' day to day activities) may have higher rates of sickness, and that workplace/home-working environment adjustments may be necessary in order to ensure that they are able to perform their role correctly.

Any disabilities that may have an adverse ability on an individuals' ability to work should be confirmed to the HR team. Any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be provided to any member of the business outside of HR without express consent from the individual. If a disability is not disclosed, we will be unable to take this into account when processing or discussing absence.

Further support and guidance

Periods of sickness absence may be a stressful time and adversely affect employees wellbeing, so if either employees or managers have any questions in relation to this policy and how it is applied, they should contact HR Department.

This policy is discretionary and non-contractual and Acuiti Labs reserves the right to depart from the policy in appropriate circumstances and/or to make changes to it from time to time in accordance with legislation and best practice guidelines.