RESEARCH COUNCIL UNAUTHORISED/UNPLANNED ABSENCE POLICY

Management Guidance

This document provides additional guidance for managers, employees and HR in the handling of unplanned absence. It includes the Research Council unauthorised/unplanned absence policy which is contractual. The additional guidance which is shaded is not intended to be legally binding and does not form part of the Research Council's unauthorised/unplanned absence policy and procedure.

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Policy Statement

The Research Council has a duty of care to all individuals working within Research Council establishments. It is therefore important to monitor attendance and if required act upon any unexpected absence; to ensure that individuals are safe and accounted for.

The unauthorised/unplanned absence policy and procedure (the 'Unauthorised Absence Policy') has been agreed with the Trade Union Side and complies with legislation.

The unauthorised/unplanned absence policy applies to all employees of the Research Council including those employed on temporary or fixed term contracts. In addition, the policy will also apply to visiting workers, students and those workers provided by a third party agency.

The UK Shared Business Services Ltd (SBS) provides HR Services across the Research Councils. However some employees are deployed at establishments/facilities/ships that do not access services from SBS. In these cases references to the SBS or System (Employee Self Service) will not apply and employees should refer to their Research Council HR team for assistance.

Whether a worker is deemed to be a worker of employee is not always clear under employment legislation. In cases where managers or individuals have any doubt as to whether the Unauthorised/unplanned absence Policy and Procedure should apply, advice should be sought from the Research Council HR team.

1. Principles

1.1 The Research Council expects contractual attendance at work unless there is an authorised absence (e.g. annual leave, maternity leave, special leave etc.). Where an employee/worker is unexpectedly absent from work they should notify their manager (or, failing that, another work colleague) as soon as possible. At the same time, the Research Council has a general duty of care to promote the health and safety of its employees/workers; and unplanned absence should initially be treated as a cause for concern. Where necessary, such absences should therefore be brought to the attention of the manager by the absent employee's/worker's colleagues. Having become aware of an employee's unplanned absence, the manager should follow the procedure set down below.

1.2 Once it has been established that the individual is safe but that notification and certification procedures have not been adhered to without good reason, unplanned absence will be treated as unauthorised.

1.3 There is no obligation for the Research Council to pay an employee during a period of unauthorised absence and disciplinary action may be taken, (link to special leave policy).

HR Managers must use their discretion in establishing the whereabouts of a member of staff who is unexpectedly absent from work. For example, if reporting an absence is out of character for that individual a manager may consider using various and additional forms of contact to ensure that the member of staff is not in any danger.

2. Policy & Procedure

2.1 Where an individual fails to attend for work as expected, managers should take all necessary action to attempt to contact the missing employee, student or worker. Any unauthorised absence must be reported to the Research Council HR team, as should any concerns the manager has about the absent employee's/worker's safety so that consideration can be given to contacting the emergency services.

2.2 Where it is established that the employee is safe but proper absence notification and certification procedures have not been followed without good reason, the absence will be treated as unauthorized. The absence may then be unpaid and disciplinary action may be instigated.

On the first day of unplanned absence the manager must attempt, using locally agreed procedures, to contact the missing employee, student or worker by telephone. The manager should try to establish the reason for the absence and failure to follow notification procedures.

If a reasonable explanation is given, it may be appropriate to record the absence as authorised, however, if no reasonable explanation is given on the individual's return the manager should normally discuss the absence with the employee/student/worker informally and warn that repeated unauthorised absence will result in disciplinary action/termination of agency contract or go straight to disciplinary action if appropriate. Managers are advised to contact the Research Council HR team before taking any formal action.

If the employee, worker or student is absent for more than 3 days, without contact, it may be necessary for the manager to use the emergency contact (available from the Research Council HR team) before sending a letter regarding the absence and possible consequences (for example cessation of pay and disciplinary action). This will of course require some discretion on the part of the manager for example it may be appropriate to contact the emergency services before 3 days if they are particularly worried about the safety of a particular individual.

3. Policy Review

3.1 This policy will be regularly reviewed to incorporate any legislation changes. The TU may request that a policy is reviewed.

4. Amendment history

Version	Date	Comments/Changes