

This policy aims to enable SF SCITT to exercise its duty of care and responsibilities in relation to ensuring that its trainees pursue their studies with diligence and avail themselves of the educational opportunities made available. It recognises that in such an intensive, one-year course absence, for whatever reason, leads to missed learning opportunities which may impact on the ability to provide evidence relating to the successful demonstration of the Teachers' Standards at the end of the programme. It is, therefore, expected that a trainee will have regular and punctual attendance at all centre and school-based sessions prescribed by the course.

This policy encompasses, with minor adaptations, approaches to the management of absence commonly used in the teaching profession as a whole.

1. Notification of absence

- 1.1 The contact for all matters to do with absence from the programme is the Programme co-ordinator and your Cohort Lead. Absences from school days must also be reported to the school following the school's own absence reporting procedures.
- 1.2 A trainee will, before the course commences, provide the contact details for a named representative who will contact, or can be contacted by the provider, in relation to the trainee's absence from the course.
- 1.3 A trainee will notify the provider of any absence from the course, whether the absence relates to school placement or central studies, **no later than 10.00 a.m. on the first day of any period of absence**. If, by that time, the provider has not been informed of an absence, the provider will contact the named representative to confirm the safety of the trainee and ascertain why he/she is not in attendance.
- 1.4 If after ten working days the provider is unable to contact the trainee or the named representative, the provider will invoke a suspension of studies, informing Student Finance England (SFE) through a Change of Circumstances (COC) submission, should one be required. This may have an impact on any maintenance loans and bursaries that have been arranged. If there is no contact in the following ten working days, the trainee will be deemed to have withdrawn from the course and the relevant authorities will be informed.

2. Sickness absence

2.1 Self-certificated absence

- 2.1.1 For absences of five working days or less (7 calendar days), a trainee will be required to complete the self-certification of absence form obtainable from the provider (Programme co-ordinator). This should be completed on return to placement/professional studies and emailed to scitt@sfet.org.uk and the cohort lead.

2.2 Medically stated sickness

- 2.2.1 If a trainee is absent for more than five working days (7 calendar days), a medical certificate or statement signed by a doctor must be sent to the provider as soon as practicable (this should also be included in the self-certification of absence on return to placement/professional studies).
- 2.2.2 If the trainee remains ill when the note expires, further medical evidence will be required.
- 2.2.3 If the absence continues for a prolonged period (more than 15 working days) or a date for the return to study exceeds 15 working days from the beginning of the absence, the provider will notify the trainee in writing that the Cause for Concern process will be instigated upon return to support the trainee to make rapid progress and gain the required experience and evidence necessary to meet the progress requirements for the current phase of training. This is necessary if the trainee is to demonstrate achievement of the Teachers' Standards by the end of the academic year. If the trainee is unable to return to training, the provider may invoke a suspension of studies informing Student Finance England (SFE) via a Change of Circumstances form (COC), suspending studies on medical grounds effective from that date.
- 2.2.4 If a trainee is subject to an ongoing illness such as depression, arthritis, unstable diabetes or asthma, a trainee should submit a form for mitigation together with a medical certificate which explains the extent

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of the illness and the likely effect on their progress through the course before the 15 working day deadline. The situation will be referred to the provider to determine whether the trainee should be considered for deferral on medical grounds.

2.3 Convalescence

- 2.3.1 A trainee returning to work after an extended period of absence may be required to submit to a medical examination by Occupational Health professionals to determine whether and what staged return to work should be implemented.

3. Maternity leave

- 3.1 General: The nature of this one year course means maternity leave as such is not available but the provider will aim to exercise what flexibility is possible within the course structure to enable the trainee to achieve QTS. The length of absence anticipated means that the course will have to be extended into a second year providing there is no substantial change in the requirements for QTS anticipated. A trainee who becomes pregnant after being offered a place or during the first half term of the course can apply to have the course deferred for one year only, subject to there being no substantial change to the requirements for QTS during the deferment. Any trainee requesting maternity leave must complete the course within six terms. One of those terms must be the final term of an academic year. There may be some implications for a trainee receiving finance from SFE.
- 3.2 The preferred plan is for a trainee to return in the second year two weeks before the anniversary of the date of commencement of maternity leave.
- 3.3 The trainee should notify the provider as soon as is practicable but not later than 14 weeks (unless there is good cause) before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) that she wishes to be absent for maternity.
- 3.4 Absence on account of illness which is attributable to the pregnancy, including absence on account of miscarriage, and which occurs outside the period of absence for maternity, shall be treated as ordinary sickness absence and shall be subject to the conditions normally governing such leave, provided it is covered by a doctor's statement.
- 3.5 Maternity leave should not normally be taken earlier than 11 weeks before the EWC.
- 3.6 When maternity leave begins, the provider will write to the trainee to formally suspend the trainee's studies, informing Student Finance England through a COC where required and record the trainee as dormant on the DMS.
- 3.7 The trainee will inform the provider of the date of birth of the child.
- 3.8 The trainee may not return to study less than two weeks after the birth of the child.
- 3.9 Thereafter, the trainee should discuss with the provider when she intends to return to study and a timeframe for the completion of the course be agreed.
- 3.10 Where a trainee does not make contact with the provider, the provider may write to the trainee no earlier than 21 days before the anniversary of the commencement of maternity leave, asking her to confirm the date of birth and her intention to return to the programme. The trainee or her representative must respond within 14 days of receiving the request. If there is no response, the provider will withdraw the trainee from the course.
- 3.12 For a trainee paying fees through an SFE loan, the fee structure means that the trainee must be present in Term 3 of one of the years in question. If that is not the case, the provider has the right to request 25% of the total tuition fees direct from the trainee.

4. Paternity leave

- 4.1 The nature of this one year course means paternity leave as such is not available but the provider will aim to exercise what flexibility is possible to allow a short period of absence within the course structure to enable the trainee to achieve QTS. If the length of absence anticipated is significant, the course is likely to have to be extended into a second year for which there may be financial implications. See compassionate leave below.

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5. Medical appointments

- 5.1 A trainee should inform the provider of any appointments for which he/she needs to take leave, being prepared to offer further evidence if requested. The difficulty of obtaining GP and hospital appointments is acknowledged and these will be honoured wherever possible though a trainee should attempt to ensure follow up appointments do not impact unnecessarily on attendance on the course.
- 5.2 Other routine medical appointments should not be made during the working day.

6. Leave of absence

- 6.1 The following outlines the rationale for decisions relating to common requests for leave of absence. They should not be seen as an exhaustive list, but serve as an indication as to how leave of absence decisions will be expedited.
 - 6.1.1 **Graduation ceremonies:** Absence of one day to attend a graduation ceremony for a first degree will be granted. Any requests for travelling time associated with this would not be expected to exceed half a day in total.
 - 6.1.2 **Interviews:** All reasonable requests will be honoured. Decisions relating to absence for interviews abroad or in places involving extra days for travel will be limited to a cumulative maximum of three working days in the year.
 - 6.1.3 **Visits to schools prior to employment:** One day will be granted before the end of the final teaching experience. A further day may be granted after this date and before the course ends. Additional days requested by the school employing the trainee after the course may be granted at the discretion of the provider.

7. Compassionate leave

- 7.1 In the event of such emergencies as bereavement, serious accident or illness of an immediate family member/dependant, up to three working days will be allowed for the death of a father, mother, son, daughter, brother or sister and up to five working days leave on the death of a husband, wife or partner.
- 7.2 Requests for additional compassionate leave, or in the case of a cumulative total of more than ten working days, must be referred to the Director of ITT.

8. Other important information

- 8.1 A maximum of two days at any one time will be granted for the purposes of urgent and unforeseen personal business which does not come under the scope of compassionate leave or to fulfil an important and significant personal commitment which cannot be undertaken at any other time.
- 8.2 **Leave of Absence** up to a cumulative total of fifteen working days during the course will be allowed. However, given the intense nature of the course, trainees will be advised that once fifteen days is reached a Cause for Concern will be instigated. This is to ensure that trainees receive the necessary support to be able to make the rapid progression needed to demonstrate attainment of the Teachers' Standards.
- 8.3 **Holidays:** The intensive nature of the course means that holidays, including those booked before commencement of the course, should not be undertaken.
- 8.4 If a provider wishes to allow holiday leave, for example to attend a family wedding, it should be noted that SFE will be informed and an adjustment to any maintenance loans may follow.

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