Appendix A – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can I return to work before the date indicated on a Fit Note?

You may wish to return to work before the end date on a Fit Note if you feel fit enough to do so. However, we would recommend that a referral is made to OHS first and a risk assessment carried out to ensure that any temporary reasonable adjustments recommended are made. Your Line Manager can refuse to allow you to return to work if they feel that there is still a risk to your health or if adjustments being recommended cannot reasonably be accommodated.

2. What if my Fit note says ‘fit to return to restricted duties’?

You should forward your Fit Note to your Line Manager who will discuss it with HR and OHS to identify if the restrictions can be accommodated. If not, you will be informed and expected to remain on sickness absence. The restrictions are a recommendation by your GP but as an employer, we are not required to comply with the recommendation. The University reserves the right to base the decision on either the Fit Note or OHS advice where there is conflicting information.

3. Should academic employees inform their School if they are sick?

It is a contractual requirement to inform the University of any sickness absence. There are implications on pay if sickness is not recorded accurately.

4. Do I have to attend OHS if my manager refers me?

You are expected to do everything possible to assist your recuperation therefore attendance at OHS is required. If you do not attend without good cause, sick pay will be withheld unless you provide medical evidence stating that attendance would be detrimental to your health and/or recovery. If that is the case, information will be sought from your medical practitioner to allow the University to make an informed decision on any ongoing absence.

5. If I am sick or injured during my annual leave, what should I do?

In this instance, you would be regarded as being on sick leave from the date you advise us in accordance with the notification requirements. In such circumstances, only days covered by a fit note can be reclaimed as annual leave excluding public holidays recognised by the University.

Employees already on sick leave before a pre-arranged period of annual leave may choose to cancel any days of holiday that coincide with the period of incapacity and have them recorded as sick leave. However, any costs associated with such cancellation are to be borne by the employee, not the University.

6. If I am on long-term absence what will happen to my accrued annual leave?

During paid sickness absence, you will continue to accrue annual leave at the rate set out in your employment contract and subject to the following provisions. Once you have exhausted your Occupational Sick Pay, you will continue to accrue the balance of the annual leave to which you are entitled under the Working Time Regulations for that leave year. (The total annual leave entitlement under those Regulations is 5.6 weeks per annum). In the event that, as a result of sick leave, you are unable to take a total of 4 weeks’ leave in any leave year, you may carry forward the balance of that 4 weeks to be taken in the following leave year. The balance that has been carried over must be taken within 18 months of the end of the leave year during which it was accrued.

7. Can I be contacted at home whilst on sickness absence?

While you are on sickness absence, you must be contactable. Managers have a responsibility to keep in touch with employees on sickness absence. However, you would not be expected to carry out work activities when on sickness absence.
8. **Can my desk/assigned office equipment be used by someone else if I am off sick?**

Your workstation is the property of the University. During sickness absence, it might be necessary for your desk or office space to be used to help cover your duties whilst you are off sick. Where there is a legitimate business need to access your electronic files in order to be able to continue service delivery, access will be requested via ITS. If you choose to save personal information to your work PC you should be aware you PC may be accessed for business purposes.

9. **Can my job be given to someone else while I am on sickness absence?**

In cases of long-term absence, your role may be temporarily filled. However, this does not mean that the person covering is taking your job; it is an arrangement for covering the duties in your absence. On your return from absence, you will normally return to your primary role unless your health or other circumstances mean this is no longer feasible.

10. **What is considered to be a day’s sickness?**

If you have been at work for less than 75% of your normal working day, it will count as one day’s absence.

11. **Can I phone in sick in order to look after a family member who is unwell?**

No. You should only phone in sick if you are personally ill and unable to undertake your duties. The University has other polices to assist in these situations, please refer to the Special Leave Policy.

12. **Can I take time off work to attend a doctor or dentist appointment?**

Time off to attend medical appointments is not recorded as sickness absence. These appointments should be made outside your working hours or at the start or end of your working day. If you work part-time, it is expected that any such appointments would not take place during working hours.

13. **Can I take annual leave during a period of certified sickness absence?**

If you wish to go on holiday during sickness absence, you must advise your line manager in advance. Your line manager will notify Salaries and the days will be deducted from your Annual Leave entitlement. Payment of sick pay will be suspended and you will be paid holiday pay instead for that period.