

Briefing Note: Guidance for Managers and Employees in relation to “Special Leave with Pay” during COVID-19 and other working arrangements

Date: 11th March 2021

The following guidance document aims to provide clarity in relation to the procedures in place in cases where:

- a staff member is advised to self-isolate while awaiting a test or following HSE instruction,
- is displaying symptoms of COVID-19,
- or has had a COVID-19 positive test result.

The guidance document also explains the procedural difference between self-isolation and restricted movement. It should be read in conjunction with *“Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19”* dated 8th March 2021.

“Special leave with pay” during COVID-19

- **“Special leave with pay” is applied in lieu of sick leave for COVID-19.** “Special leave with pay” should only apply in lieu of sick leave for COVID-19 when an employee is advised to self-isolate **and** is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 **or** had a positive test.
- Any “special leave with pay” granted for the purpose of self-isolation and/or diagnosis of COVID-19 will not be counted as part of the employee’s sick leave record. Appropriate medical/HSE confirmation of the need to self-isolate and/or a diagnosis of COVID-19 will be required for the duration of the absence.
- From 1 January 2021, in instances where an employee has a confirmed case of COVID-19, “special leave with pay” may be extended up to 28 days¹ if necessary and where it is supported by a positive test for COVID-19 and ongoing medical certification. **If an employee is still unwell after 28 days they will move to ordinary sick leave arrangements.**
- Employees cannot voluntarily choose to self-isolate. Medical/HSE advice will be required.
- The arrangements relating to the application of “special leave with pay” for COVID-19 is temporary, and will be kept under regular review. A further review will be carried out not later than 31 March 2021

¹ *Special leave with pay can be extended up to 28 days if necessary, Please refer to Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19*

Managing sick leave absence due to COVID-19

The general principles applying to the management of sick leave, for example the requirement of employees to contact managers, and for ongoing contact with employees who are on special leave for this purpose, will apply.

As per normal practice, all sickness absences of 28 days duration must be referred to occupational health, including absence attributed to COVID-19.

Restricted movements (following confirmation of close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case)

“Special leave with pay” does **not apply** to individuals who are restricting their movements or who are in the high risk or very high risk category and are cocooning **as they are not ill**. Staff in these categories will be facilitated to work from home.

If remote working in an employee’s current role is not feasible, then the assignment of work may be outside of their usual core duties. Employees must cooperate with all such flexibilities while they are restricting their movements. In all such cases, employees remain available for work whilst at home, where they have been advised to restrict their movements as a precautionary measure.

Employee Assistance programme (EAP):

Employees may find the services of the university’s Employee Assistance Programme beneficial during these challenging times. The service is available to staff and their families and is strictly confidential. Details of the EAP service can be found at: <https://www.dit.ie/hr/employeeassistanceprogramme/>. VHI operate the scheme on behalf of TU Dublin and you may contact them at 1800 995 955 or email them at eap@vhics.ie.

Further information:

For further Government information and FAQ’s relating to “Special Leave with pay”, please refer to “Updates for Staff” at the following link: www.tudublin.ie/covid19

Appendix A provides guidance to employees and managers to their responsibilities if diagnosed with COVID-19.

You may direct queries to your manager or contact Human Resources at hr.grangegorman@tudublin.ie.

Appendix A

Procedures for Managers

- A staff member who is advised to self-isolate **and** is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 **or** has had a positive test with symptoms of COVID-19 must inform their manager before 10.00 a.m. on first day of experiencing symptoms.
- Staff members should provide dates and HSE confirmation/medical certification/satisfactory proof of COVID-19 test, including date of test.
- Upon receipt of the HSE/medical certification you or your local Accounts Office or HR (Blanchardstown & Tallaght) will be required to update Core Time with the duration of the HSE/medical confirmation. This is recorded in Core Time as ‘Certified Sick Leave’.
- Please forward a copy of the HSE/medical confirmation to HR. Upon receipt HR will update your Core Time record to “special leave with pay”.
- Please record if the employee was/was not on the campus in the 14 days prior to the date of self-isolation and advise HR. This information will be required if the employee has a confirmed case of COVID-19 and the duration of COVID-19 related illness continues beyond 28 days. Employees who were not in the work premises will move to ordinary sick leave thereafter.
- Managers should make employees aware of the need to stay in regular contact and advise them of the employee assistance programme.
- Managers should alert the employee to any follow up actions that are required, including occupational health referrals (after an absence of 28 days), the need to provide documentation and actions on their return to work (for example, return to work protocols etc.).

Procedures for employees

- Please telephone your manager before 10 a. m. on the first day of experiencing symptoms as would normally be the case for sick leave. A voice-mail or message left with a junior colleague is not acceptable. You will be required to notify your manager of the number of days you have been advised to self-isolate. You will be required to provide confirmation/medical certification/satisfactory evidence of a positive test for COVID-19 or the advice to self-isolate.
- Please note that Public Service employees cannot claim DSP COVID-19 illness benefit in cases where they are receiving “special leave with pay”.
- Your absence will be recorded as “special leave with pay”.
- By applying for “special leave with pay”, you agree that in the event of non-compliance with the provisions of “special leave with pay” (including the requirement to provide bona fide

confirmation of self-isolation for COVID-19) existing procedures, including disciplinary measures may be invoked.

- Where an absence exceeds 28 days duration, you will be required to attend the University's Occupational Health Providers, Medmark, prior to resumption of duty. In this case, a medical certificate will be required up to the date you resume duty.
- Employees are not entitled to days in lieu of bank holidays whilst in receipt of "special leave with pay".
- Appropriate medical/HSE confirmation of the need to self-isolate and/or a diagnosis of COVID-19 will be required.