

Providing cover for faculty sickness

The circumstances of faculty absence due to sickness or health issues (such as scheduled operations or treatment) are subject to significant variation, and any attempt to formulate a policy that would address every eventuality is likely to be unsuccessful. The variables might include the possibility (or not) of advance notification of absence, the length of absence, the nature of the teaching that would need to be covered, the availability (or not) of suitably qualified colleagues for the sessions scheduled, the point in the term at which the absence occurs, etc.

It is therefore proposed that practice in this area should be informed by the following set of key principles:

- While in some circumstances it may be appropriate for the absent or soon-to-be absent colleague to have some involvement in making cover arrangements, overall responsibility for ensuring the teaching is covered will reside with the subject head in liaison with the relevant module/course convenor.
- Wherever possible cover will be provided for an absent colleague where students would otherwise miss a scheduled teaching session, except in circumstances where that material can be covered in another way which neither involves the reassignment of work to others nor subsequently increases the workload of the absent colleague.
- Where a module is being delivered by more than one tutor, another tutor assigned to the module may be best placed to cover the teaching of the absent colleague.
- Faculty will not unreasonably be assigned duties resulting from a colleague's illness, and any concerns about resulting workload will be given careful consideration by the subject head in order to assess priorities. Any request to take on reassigned duties will be accompanied by a clear indication of how that additional work will be recognised in PAW.
- Where cover is required over an extended period as a result of an extended absence (normally of two weeks or more) that could not reasonably have been anticipated, every effort will be made to spread the teaching load equitably among any colleagues who are in a position to take on limited extra teaching of the module content in question. Any such extra teaching will be formally recognised in PAW, though it is accepted that in most cases this recognition will necessarily be retrospective. In exceptional circumstances the option of suspending a module may be considered.
- Where it is impossible to cover teaching from within the existing establishment, Doctoral Tutors may exceptionally be assigned to take on these duties. Any such action will be taken in accordance with the agreed Doctoral Tutor hiring policy.

It is hoped that these principles will ensure transparency in the allocation of cover teaching for sick leave and contribute to the establishment of a culture in which faculty can, where necessary, take such leave with the expectation that their absence will not disproportionately impact the working lives of individual colleagues.

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