School closures and absence recording

Due to the announcements about school closures and the medical advice surrounding self-isolation we wanted to provide you with further guidance on how to record absence and how we will support members of staff who are now staying at home with children to care for.

School closures

We wish to continue to support our staff through this difficult time by ensuring we are as flexible as possible when it comes to staff now impacted by school closures.

We are therefore asking managers to be as flexible as possible in relation to staff affected. This may mean that staff are working reduced or non-standard hours and we would ask that you reassure your teams that this is acceptable. We appreciate that this is a difficult time for all and wish to provide reassurance and we are supportive of all members of our community as we work through this.

If you are unable to work as usual due to a school closure there will be no need to record this as absence and your pay will not be affected.

We ask that you work with your Manager to determine how work priorities can still be delivered and how your working hours can be adapted to take into account childcare responsibilities. We appreciate and thank you for your continued best efforts to support the University and colleagues as best we can.

We do recognise that this is different to our normal position of allowing home working with childcare, however these are exceptional circumstances.

COVID19 diagnosis for those self-isolating

We have updated the absence recording reasons on iTrent. These do need to be recorded so we can ensure we are offering support to our staff and managers.

The University is clear in its policy of how staff will be paid when absent from work in a COVID19 related absence. In addition to paying staff we want to understand how many of our staff may be affected and what we can further do to support affected staff or areas. We have therefore created separate absence reporting options within iTrent and via People Manager.

COVID19 related absences will be treated as other absence but will not affect an individual’s entitlement to sick pay; the entitlement will not be impacted by length of service or any other current terms and conditions around entitlement to pay. Further support for staff is now available on our webpages, which we will be working on keeping updated, as more news is available.

The categories for recording are:

- Self-isolating confirmed COVID-19
- Self-isolating with COVID-19 type symptoms
- Self-isolating shared household with someone with confirmed/COVID-19 type symptoms
- Self-isolating due to underlying health condition

These can be accessed via People Manager and recording of ‘Other absence’, attached is a guide to help you when processing this information.

If you currently do not record your absence through People Manager (UECS or WHH) or are unable to access People Manager please can you email sickness@essex.ac.uk with the details and we will record this on your behalf.

Should you need any further help on how this is done please contact staffing@essex.ac.uk