



University
of Glasgow | Human
Resources

Considering Reasonable Adjustments

Guidance

Guidance – Considering Reasonable Adjustments

Introduction

The University aims to create and support a healthy, productive and efficient working environment through a caring and rehabilitative approach towards the management of attendance and performance. To this end the University seeks to be supportive and flexible in assisting employees when supporting their attendance, performance or rehabilitation back to work.

The University also has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments' to workplace arrangements in order to accommodate an employee's disability.

This is particularly relevant when managing matters of attendance and whilst this duty applies to staff with disabilities, the University values the health and productivity of all employees. The University therefore adopts a position whereby adjustments will be considered as a matter of normal practice in all cases where an adjustment may support good performance at work, aid a return to work or support/improve attendance levels, regardless of the cause of absence or underlying medical condition.

This guidance document serves to provide additional information around making adjustments to support employees both in terms of sustaining their attendance at work, supporting their performance at work or supporting a return to work following a longer or more serious absence. It provides high level guidance around key considerations however additional advice is always available from local HR Teams or from the Occupational Health service and should be considered depending on the circumstances of the case.

What is a 'Reasonable' Adjustment?

The legal duty to apply 'reasonable adjustments' only arises where an employee has a disability, however it is good practice to consider adjustments in all cases where such an adjustment may aid an employee's return to work or support/improve their attendance levels or performance at work.

When considering whether or not an adjustment might be 'reasonable', the following should be considered:

- The effectiveness of the adjustment in overcoming and identified disadvantage
- The practicality of implementing the adjustment
- Any financial or other costs, including any potential disruption caused
- The extent of the resources (including financial) available
- The availability of financial or other assistance (e.g. Access to Work Scheme)

Whilst professional advice and support is available, it is ultimately the responsibility of the line manager to determine whether or not they deem it reasonable to implement any recommended adjustment(s). (i.e. if Occupational Health suggest adjustments, it is still decision of the line manager to determine if the suggested adjustments can be accommodated).

In more complex cases, or where there is any uncertainty, managers are encouraged to seek additional advice from their local HR Team.

Becoming Aware of a Medical Condition

Managers may become aware that an employee has a medical condition or disability through a number of different routes, for example:

- An employee may 'self-declare', either as part of a recruitment process or through notifying their manager during routine or day-to-day contact (e.g. a one-to-one meeting).
- The identification of a medical condition or disability may come during or following a period of absence (e.g. confirmed by Occupational Health)

It is not uncommon for managers to be advised that an employee has a condition that is likely to meet the definition of disability. The reason for this is that it is ultimately a matter of legal opinion and not within the remit of an individual medical adviser to say definitively.

Identifying Possible Adjustments

Adjustments need not be difficult or expensive and solutions can often be found through open dialogue with the employee. Managers should seek professional advice (e.g. HR, medical) at any point if it is required to help both themselves and the employee to make informed decisions. Medical advice is particularly relevant in more complex cases or where there are gaps in either party's understanding (e.g. understanding how a condition may impact the employee in the workplace).

Managers should discuss their employee's medical condition/disability with them, with a particular focus on the following:

- Building an understanding of what the employee's needs are, including what they can and cannot do (e.g. tasks, activities etc)

- Assessing possible barriers to the employee's attendance at work (or their ability return to work) or their ability to perform their role as effectively and safely as they can
- Considering any adjustments or supports which might assist in overcoming these barriers
- In many cases, Occupational Health advice may be required
- Reviewing any health and safety risk assessments in light of the proposed adjustments
- Setting review dates to measure the effectiveness of any adjustments implemented

Some examples of adjustments are listed below, however this list is not exhaustive:

Examples - Adjustments to the Working Environment

- Moving tasks/activities to more accessible areas
- Making alterations to work equipment or furniture (e.g. desk, mouse, chair, monitor)
- Making alterations to premises (e.g. providing a handrail)
- Taking steps to reduce noise or adjust lighting (e.g. installing barriers/boards)

Examples - Adjustments to the Job

- Providing additional training
- Modifying instructions or reference manuals
- Providing a mentor to an employee while they regain their confidence at work
- Reallocating work within the employee's team
- Modifying systems/processes (e.g. to reduce pressure or give the employee more control)
- Arranging telephone conferences to cut travel
- Temporarily providing alternative work
- Considering redeployment to a more suitable role (Please obtain HR advice)

Examples - Adjustments to Working Arrangements

- Allowing a phased return to normal working hours or workloads to build up strength and confidence
- Changing working hours to allow easier travel to work
- Allowing flexible working to ease work/life balance
- Allow more structured breaks from work
- Adjusting the Review Points identified in the University's Managing Attendance policy so that an employee with a disability is not adversely affected. (Please take HR advice).

Making Adjustments

Identified adjustments should be implemented as quickly as possible and any delays should be kept to an absolute minimum.

Implemented adjustments should be closely monitored and reviewed in the early days, then periodically as needed to assess how effective they have been in removing any barriers to work. If adjustments are temporary (e.g. alternative duties), clear timescales for review should be discussed and agreed at the start.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to agree to a trial period to 'test' whether or not an adjustment is going to be suitable or effective.

Managers should maintain an open mind that further adjustments may be required in the future.

It is also important to remember that new health and safety risk assessments may be required, or existing ones reviewed, as a result of any changes.

Additional Support

For additional support in relation to any of the contents of this guidance note, please contact your local HR Team.