**Absence Policy**

**2023 – 2024**

This policy aims to enable West Midlands Consortium to exercise its duty of care and responsibilities in relation to ensuring that its trainees pursue their studies with diligence and avail themselves of the educational opportunities made available. It recognises that in such an intensive one-year course absence, for whatever reason, leads to missed learning opportunities which may impact on the ability to provide evidence relating to the successful demonstrations of the Teachers’ Standards at the end of the course. It is, therefore, expected that an Associate Teacher will be regular and punctual in attendance at all taught and school-based sessions prescribed by the course. This policy encompasses, with minor adaptations, approaches to the management of absence commonly used in the teaching profession as a whole.

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| **Notification of Absence**  |

The contacts for all matters relating to absence are:

Su Plant – Director of ITT – ssplant@ttsonline.net

Iain Sweeney – Assistant Director of ITT – isweeney@ttsonline.net

Anna Foster – Administrator – wmc.ttsonline.net

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| **Sickness Absence** |

Absence due to illness must be reported by 8.00am to:

* Your Course Leader (by phone or email);
* The WMC Administrator (by email);
* And, if in school, to the school office (by phone) and to your mentor (by phone or email);

**Self-Certified Absence**

For absences of five days or less, an AT is able to self-certify their absence, following agreed WMC absence procedures. There is a **limit** for self-certification of **six** days within the course a whole.

**Medically Statemented Sickness**

If an AT is absent for more than five days, a medical certificate or statement signed by a doctor must be sent to WMC as soon as practicable. If the AT remains ill when the note expires, further medical evidence will be required. If the absence continues for a prolonged period (more than 15 working days) or a date for the return to study exceeds 15 working days from the beginning of the absence, WMC will notify the AT in writing that it is suspending the trainee’s study from that 15 day point. If the AT is in receipt of finance from SFE, a Change of Circumstances form will be submitted to SFE by WMC suspending studies on medical grounds effective from that date.

In the event of an illness raising doubts about an AT’s fitness to teach, WMC will require medical evidence that they are fit to return. It should be noted that, given the rigours of the qualification, options for a phased return are very limited in which cases the actions listed under the following headings may have to be implemented.

Failure to report an absence is a breach of WMC policy and Professional Standards for QTS and will result in disciplinary action. (See WMC Discipline Policy)

**Long Term Illness**

Long-term illness has a very serious impact on an AT’s ability to progress against Teachers’ Standards. In extreme cases, they may be unable to qualify due to non-compliance with government regulations.

Even if compliant with government regulations, an AT’s illness may so disrupt the learning of a school placement as to render it impossible for them to demonstrate the progression required for that phase. Since each placement is different and each AT’s circumstances are unique, it is impossible to provide rigid rules for how this might play out. However, the Director of ITT monitors absences and any AT in such danger will be placed on an enhanced support procedure plan. This means that the AT will be advised and supported as to how best to proceed. Each case will be different but this might mean:

* Having to extend the placement to make up additional days
* Having to extend their placement into the next academic year to be able to qualify.

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| **Maternity Leave** |

The nature of this one year course means maternity leave as such is not available. However, WMC will aim to exercise what flexibility is possible within the course structure to enable the AT to achieve QTS. The length of absence anticipated mans that the course will have to be extended into a second year providing that there is no substantial change in the requirements for QTS anticipated. An AT who becomes pregnant after being offered a place or during the first half term of the course can apply to have the course deferred for one year only, subject to there being no substantial change to the requirements for QTS during the deferment. Any AT requesting maternity leave must complete the course within six terms. There may be some implications for an AT receiving finance from SFE.

The preferred plan is for an AT to return in the second year, two weeks before the anniversary of the date of commencement of maternity leave.

The AT should notify WMC as soon as is practicable but no later than 14 weeks (unless there is a good cause) before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) that she wishes to be absent for maternity.

Absence on account of illness which is attributable to the pregnancy, including absence on account of miscarriage, and which occurs outside the period of absence for maternity, shall be treated as ordinary sickness absence and shall be subject to the conditions normally governing such leave provided that it is covered by a doctor’s statement.

Maternity leave should not normally be taken earlier than 11 weeks before the EWC. When maternity leave begins, WMC will write to the AT to formally suspend their studies, informing the SFE through a COC where required and record the AT as dormant on the DMS.

The AT will inform WMC of the date of birth of their child.

The AT may not return to study less than two weeks after the birth. Thereafter, they should discuss with WMC when she intends to return to study and a timeframe for the completion of the course be agreed.

When an AT does not make contact with WMC, WMC may write to the AT no earlier than 21 days before the anniversary of the commencement of maternity leave, asking her to confirm the date of birth and her intention to return to work. The AT or her representative must respond within 14 days of receiving the request. If there is no response, WMC will withdraw the AT from the course.

If requiring student finance, the AT will need to apply for finance (as a returning student repeating Year 1) for the second academic year. At the beginning of the first term, the AT will continue to have her studies suspended and SFE informed through a COC. A further COC will be completed when the AT returns to the course.

For an AT paying fees through a SFE loan, the fee structure means that they must be present in Term 3 of one of the years in question. If that is not the case, WMC has the right to request 25% of the total tuition fees direct from the AT.

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| **Paternity Leave** |

The nature of this one year course means paternity leave as such is not available but WMC will aim to exercise what flexibility is possible to allow a short period of absence within the course structure to enable the AT to achieve QTS. If the length of absence anticipated is significant, the course is likely to have to be extended into a second year for which there may be financial implications. See compassionate leave below.

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| **Medical Appointments** |

Routine appointments, for example dental check-ups, should not be made during course hours and leave will **not** be granted for these.

An AT should inform WMC of any appointments for which he/she needs to take leave, being prepared to offer further evidence if requested. The difficulty of obtaining GP and hospital appointments is acknowledged and these will be honoured wherever possible though the AT should attempt to ensure that follow-up appointments do not impact unnecessarily on attendance on the course.

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| **Medical Emergencies** |

We ask that ATs provide contact details for a nominated representative whom we can contact in the event of an emergency. These should be logged with the Director of ITT at the beginning of the course.

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| **Leave of Absence** |

Leave of absence for other reasons may be granted by the Director of ITT acting on behalf of WMC.
It is expected that an application will be made for leave of absence, in writing, using the agreed proforma, **at least** five working days before the absence occurs.

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| **Compassionate Leave** |

WMC will grant compassionate leave in the event of such emergencies as bereavement or serious accident or illness of an immediate family member/dependant.

In such cases, the leave of absence proforma may be completed retrospectively but ATs must still contact the Director of ITT, their course leader and, if applicable, their school, and inform them of the circumstances. The Director will then arrange with the AT how best to support them and discuss any possible implications regarding their progression.

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| **Holiday Leave** |

Given the nature of the course, holiday leave will **not** be granted even for holidays booked before commencing the course.

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| **Absence and Compliance with Government Regulations** |

WMC logs all AT absences and warns both the trainee and Director of ITT if there is a danger of the AT being non-compliant.

Should an AT, through absence, fall below the current government compliance regulations, they will, at the discretion of the Director of ITT, be offered the opportunity to make up the extra time. If the shortfall is relatively minor, it may be possible to achieve this by extending an AT’s Placement B experience.

In the event of more major shortfalls, due, for example, to prolonged illness, this may require deferral and the completion of the AT’s course during the next academic year. In such cases, the completion will be arranged at a time determined by balancing an AT’s wishes with the operational constraints of WMC’s partner schools.

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| **Absence and Negative Impact on an Associate Teacher’s Progression** |

Even where absence does not result in non-compliance, the Director of ITT reserves the right to insist on an AT making up lost time if there is evidence that the absence has had a negative impact on the AT’s progression. Just as above, this may result in extension of Placement B or deferral.

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| **Data Protection** |

Data will be processed in line with the requirements and protections set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation.