



WEST MIDLANDS CONSORTIUM

In Association with Thomas Telford School

Absence Policy 2018 – 2019

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 a trainee 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.

Notification of Absence

The contacts for all matters relating to absence are

Fodoulla Vanezi – West Midlands Consortium Administrator – wmc@ttsonline.net

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

Sickness Absence

Absence due to illness must be reported to by 9.00am to:

- The WMC Administrator (by phone or email);
- And, if in school, to the school office (by phone)

Self-Certified Absence

For absences of five days or less, a trainee 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 Stated Sickness

If a trainee 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 trainee 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 trainee in writing that it is suspending the trainee's study from that 15 day point. If the trainee 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 a trainee's fitness to teach, WMC will require medical evidence that a trainee is 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 a trainee'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, a trainee'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 trainee's circumstances are unique, it is impossible to provide rigid rules for how this might play out. However, the Administrator and Director of ITT monitor absences and any trainee in such danger will be placed on an enhanced support procedure plan. This means that the trainee 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.

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 trainee to achieve QTS. The length of absence anticipated means 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. A trainee 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 trainee requesting maternity leave must complete the course within six terms. There may be some implications for a trainee receiving finance from SFE.

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

The trainee 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 trainee to formally suspend their studies, informing the SFE through a COC where required and record the trainee as dormant on the DMS.

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

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

When a trainee does not make contact with WMC, WMC may write to the trainee 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 trainee or her representative must respond within 14 days of receiving the request. If there is no response, WMC will withdraw the trainee from the course.

If requiring student finance, the trainee 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 trainee will continue to

have her studies suspended and SFE informed through a COC. A further COC will be completed when the trainee returns to the course.

For a trainee 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 trainee.

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 trainee 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.

Medical Appointments

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

A trainee 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 trainee should attempt to ensure that follow-up appointments do not impact unnecessarily on attendance on the course.

Medical Emergencies

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

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** two working days before the absence occurs.

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 trainees must still contact the WMC Administrator and Director of ITT and, if applicable, their school, and inform them of the circumstances. The Director will then arrange with the trainee how best to support them and discuss any possible implications regarding their progression.

Holiday Leave

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

Absence and Compliance with Government Regulations

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

Should a trainee, 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 a trainee'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 trainee's course during the next academic year. In such cases, the completion will be arranged at a time determined by balancing a trainee's wishes with the operational constraints of WMC's partner schools.

Absence and Negative Impact on a Trainee's Progression

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