PERSONNEL SERVICES
University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD
Director of Human Resources

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

To: Heads of Division, Heads of Departments and Institutions, Divisional
Secretaries, Departmental Administrators

Ref: EMS/5
EMS/6

cc: HR business partners, Mr C. Morgan

18th December 2013

Revised University procedures on sickness absence, and induction and probation

The University's policies and procedures on sickness absence management and induction and probation have been reviewed and updated.

The revised procedures and associated guidance may be found at:

Sickness http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/sickmanage/

Probation http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/recruit/probation/

Induction http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/recruit/induction/

Induction and Probation for Departmental Administrators
http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/daproject/induction/

1. Action required of departments/faculties

Departments/faculties are asked to:

- note the revised procedures and guidance;
- consider how local procedures may need to be updated in line with the new arrangements;
- note the revised pro-formas and replace any forms currently in use;
- draw the revised procedures to the attention of line managers and staff who may have any line management responsibilities.

2. Background

a) Sickness absence:

The guidance on how to handle problematic sickness absence had not been republished since the new Personnel Services website was launched in 2011 as it needed review, and it was anticipated that the review could incorporate reference to the Core modules for recording and monitoring sickness absence. However, since the introduction of the Core 'time and attendance' module is still pending, the procedures have had a light-touch review to ensure that some interim guidance is available to departments.

Minor changes have been made throughout the guidance in order to provide managers with procedures and processes that are clearer and easier to work, with a restructured layout and better navigation.

b) Induction and Probation

The guidance has been revised in order to provide managers with a more comprehensive guide to work with, from the beginning to the end of an employee's probation. More focus has been placed on the positive aspects of a probationary period, whilst still ensuring the guidance is compliant with current legislation and best practice. The aim of the amendments is to help create procedures that are fit for purpose, consistent and fair.

3. The revised guidance

a) Sickness absence:

The substantial changes are as follows:

- revision of the guidance on statutory sick pay to reflect current legislation and practice;
- the self-certification and return to work discussions forms have been merged into one form with the intention of encouraging return to work discussions, and timely reviews where sickness absence is regular or significant;
- revision and simplification of the section on Fit Notes;
- addition of new sections:
  - ➢ in relation to considerations on sickness matters for staff on different types of contracts;
  - ➢ guidance on managing frequent and long-term sickness absences;
  - ➢ guidance on managing mental health issues at work.
- the procedure on 'informal counselling', has been relabelled as 'informal discussions - for addressing concerns' since the term 'informal counselling' was causing confusion;
- a new calculator tool to check eligibility for sick pay has been developed.

b) Induction and probation

The substantial changes are as follows:

- the guidance about setting the length of probationary periods has been revised for clarity;
- the guidance on reviewing probationary employees has been rewritten to encourage a more consistent and comprehensive approach;
- the induction and probationary guidance for Departmental Administrators has been revised in line with the central guidance and current practice;
- all associated forms have been revised and updated.

MR JULIAN DUXFIELD
Director of Human Resources.

For notice boards: YES