

Absence Policy

This policy aims to ensure that trainees pursue their studies with diligence and allows them to participate in all 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 sufficient evidence to successfully meet the Teachers' Standards at the end of the course. Trainees are expected to be punctual and attend all centre and school-based sessions as detailed on the timetable.

This policy covers the main types of absence as follows:

1. **Notification of absence**
2. **Sickness absence**
3. **Maternity leave**
4. **Paternity leave**
5. **Medical appointment**
6. **Leave of absence**
7. **Compassionate leave**
8. **Private and personal circumstances**
9. **Withdrawal from course**

1 Notification of absence

- 1.1 The contact for all matters to do with absence is: jackie@billericayscitt.com (secondary) and fiona@billericayscitt.com (primary)
- 1.2 A trainee will before the course commences provide the contact details for a named representative who will contact, or can be contacted, in relation to the trainee's absence from the course.
- 1.3 A trainee is to email the SCITT office by 8.00am if they will not be attending school/lectures on the first day of any period of absence. If, by 9.00 am, the trainee is not in attendance and has not informed us in advance of any reason for absence, we will contact the named representative to confirm the safety of the trainee and ascertain why they are not in attendance.
- 1.4 If after 10 working days we have not been able to contact the trainee or the named representative, a suspension of studies will be invoked, and we will inform Student Finance England (SFE) or Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) through a Change of Circumstances (CoC) submission. This may have an impact on any maintenance loans and bursaries the trainee receives. If there is no contact in the following 10 working days, the trainee will be deemed to have withdrawn from the course and all relevant authorities will be informed.

2 Sickness Absence (See Appendix 1)

2.1 Self-Certificated Absence

- 2.1.1 For absences of seven (including non-working) days or less, a trainee will be required to complete a BEC Teacher Training absence document detailing the reason for absence and will be asked to sign the relevant form from the SCITT office staff.
- 2.1.2 There is a limit for self-certification, total number of 7 days within the academic year. If self-certification cumulatively exceeds 7 days within the academic year, the trainee will be asked to attend a meeting with the Course / Executive Director to discuss the issues. See Appendix 1.

2.2 Medically stated sickness

- 2.2.1** If a trainee is absent for more than seven days in a row (including non-working days), a doctor's 'fit note' or statement signed by a doctor must be submitted.
- 2.2.2** If the trainee remains ill when the note expires, the doctor must be asked for a further note.
- 2.2.3** 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, the trainee will be informed, in writing, that we are suspending the trainee's study from that 15-day point. If the trainee is in receipt of finance from SFE or HEFCW, a CoC form will be submitted to SFE or HEFCW suspending studies on medical grounds effective from that date.

2.3 Convalescence

- 2.3.1** The nature of the course does not allow for light duties or other ways of reducing the workload. However, on return to the course a trainee will have the opportunity of a reduced timetable before carrying out important assessments.
- 2.3.2** A trainee returning to the course after an extended period of absence may be required to complete a further medical questionnaire to be submitted to Occupational Health professionals to determine whether and what staged return to work should be implemented.

3. Maternity Leave

- 3.1** Generally, the nature of this one-year course means maternity leave as such is not available but we will aim to exercise what flexibility is possible within the course structure to enable the trainee to be recommended for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The length of absence anticipated means that the course will have to be extended into a second year providing 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 6 terms. One of those terms must if possible be the final term of an academic year. There may be some implications for a trainee receiving finance from SFE or HEFCW and DfE bursary payments.
- 3.2** 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.
- 3.3** The trainee should notify us as soon as is practicable but not later than 14 weeks (unless there is good cause) before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) that she wishes to be absent for maternity.
- 3.4** 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 it is covered by a doctor's statement/note.
- 3.5** Maternity leave should not normally be taken earlier than 11 weeks before the EWC.
- 3.6** When maternity leave begins we will write to the trainee to formally suspend the trainee's studies, informing the SFE or HEFCW through a CoC where required and record the trainee as dormant on the Register of Trainee Teachers.
- 3.7** The trainee will inform us of the date of birth of the child.
- 3.8** The trainee may not return to study less than two weeks after the birth of the child.
- 3.9** Thereafter the trainee should discuss with us when she intends to return to study and a timeframe for the completion of the course be agreed.
- 3.10** Where a trainee does not make contact with us, we 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 the course. The trainee or their representative must respond within 14 days of receiving the request. If there is no response we will withdraw the trainee from the course.
- 3.11** If requiring student finance, the trainee will need to apply for finance for the second academic year. At the beginning of the first term the trainee will continue to have their studies suspended and SFE informed through a CoC. A further CoC will be completed when the trainee returns to the course.

- 3.12 For trainees paying fees through SFE or HEFCW, the fee structure means that the trainee must be present in term 3 for one of the years in question.
- 3.13 Any bursary the trainee is presently entitled to will stop when they are no longer present on the course. The BEC Administration team will need to inform DfE and seek guidance on how the remainder will be paid on the trainee's return.

4 Paternity Leave

- 4.1 The nature of this one-year course means paternity leave as such is not available but we 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 further financial implications will be determined.

5. Medical appointments

- 5.1 Trainees should inform us of any appointments for which they need 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 a trainee should attempt to ensure follow up appointments do not impact unnecessarily on attendance of the course.
- 5.2 Other routine medical appointments, e.g. routine dentist and optician appointments should **not** be made during the working day.

6. Leave of Absence

- 6.1 Appendix 2 needs to be completed to request leave of absence.
- 6.2 It is expected that application will be made for leave of absence, in writing, using the agreed proforma (Appendix 2), at least 2 weeks before the absence occurs.
- 6.3 In the case of absence included in *private and personal* or *compassionate* categories (sections 7 and 8) a completed proforma should be submitted to the Executive Director on the return to study.
- 6.4 The following outlines the rationale for decisions relating to common requests for leave of absence. They should not be seen as an exhaustive list but serve as an indication as to how leave of absence decisions will be expedited.
 - 6.4.1 **Graduation Ceremonies:** Absence of one day to attend a graduation ceremony for a first degree will be granted. Any requests for travelling time associated with this would not be expected to exceed half a day in total.
 - 6.4.2 **Wedding ceremonies:** Absence of one day to attend a wedding will be granted, but only if the person(s) getting married are close relatives or the trainee is a key member of the wedding ceremony.
 - 6.4.3 For leave of absence relating to the following circumstances, an email request needs to be sent to fiona@billericayscitt.com (primary) or jackie@billericayscitt.com (secondary) to gain authorisation:
 - Interviews:** All reasonable requests will be honoured. Decisions relating to absence for interviews abroad or in places involving extra days for travel will be limited to a cumulative maximum of 3 working days in the year.
 - Visits to schools before application/interview:** Given the open-ended nature of these absences and the significant demands of the course, whilst leave of absence will be granted, discretion should be used by the trainee when organising these visits.
 - Visits to schools prior to employment for primary trainees:** One day will be granted before the end of the final teaching practice. A further day may be granted after this date and before the course ends.

7. **Compassionate Leave**

7.1 In the event of emergencies such as bereavement, serious accident, hospitalisation or illness of an immediate family member/dependant, compassionate leave will be granted at the discretion of the Executive Director.

7.2 Requests for other types of compassionate leave must be referred to the Executive Director, and Appendix 2 will need to be completed.

8. **Private and Personal circumstances**

8.1 A maximum of 2 days at any one time will be granted for the purposes of urgent and unforeseen personal business which does not come under the scope of compassionate leave or to fulfil an important and significant personal commitment which cannot be undertaken at any other time. Appendix 2 will need to be completed.

8.2 **If a dependent is ill**, any time taken off from the course will be classed as unauthorised leave.

8.3 **Holidays:** The intensive nature of the course means that holidays, including those booked before commencement of the course, should not be arranged and not taken during term time.

8.4 If you wish to apply for holiday leave, for example to attend a family wedding, it should be noted that SFE or HEFCW will be informed and an adjustment to any maintenance loans may follow (see section 6.4.2).

8.5 **Attendance of child's activities**, requests to attend a child's activity will **not** be granted. The course cannot accommodate trainees taking time off for assemblies, Christmas plays etc.

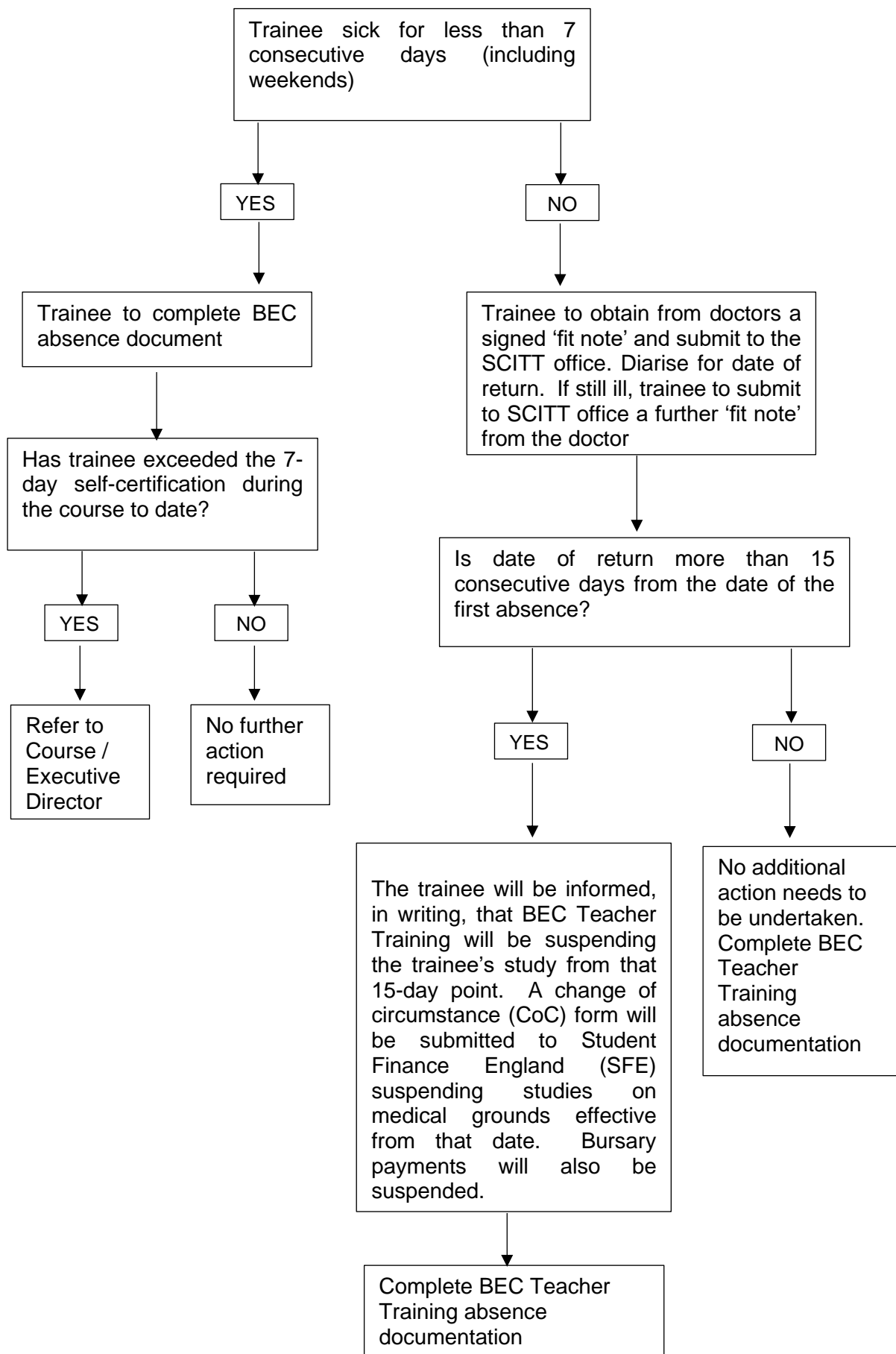
9. **Withdrawal from Course**

9.1 After consultation with the Executive Director and the school, if a trainee decides to withdraw from the course they must at the exit interview produce:

- Letter of withdrawal quoting date of withdrawal and reason
- Return ID badge
- Return any resources/books
- Inform SFE or HEFCW) of withdrawal from course

Updated July 2021

Sickness Absence



I (name of trainee)

at (name of placement school)

wish to request leave of absence for the following circumstance:

| | Provide full details | Dates of absence |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Graduation ceremony | | |
| Compassionate leave | | |
| Private and personal circumstances | | |
| Other | | |

Signed: (trainee)

Date:

Approved by: K Truscott-Howell
Executive Director