



**During the global coronavirus pandemic we are facing a tragic loss of life, often under very difficult circumstances.**

Bereaved staff members may have to deal with increased trauma, and may be cut off from some of their usual support network. Those who are already struggling with bereavement, or whose relatives or friends die through other causes will also be affected.

**To support a member of staff dealing with bereavement and grief, the line manager should:**

In the early days of an employee's bereavement, it is good practice for the manager to:

Offer their condolences.

Ensure that the bereaved staff member knows that work comes

## Compassionate leave at Queen Margaret University

Details of the policy around bereavement are contained in the Special Leave Policy under Section 7 – Compassionate leave. [Special Leave Policy](#) Compassionate leave is leave with pay and is granted to assist staff members to cope during periods of bereavement.

Compassionate leave should normally be limited to up to three days, but in exceptional circumstances, a further three days may be granted, up to a maximum of six days in total. Agreement on the number of days granted is reached through discussion between the staff member and the line manager and will often be determined by the circumstances, the relationships involved.

## Managing bereavement and returning to work

The guidance below refers to workplace, however given the current circumstances 'the workplace' is currently home.

- A conversation about when the staff member anticipates returning to work may not be appropriate in the first few days of bereavement. However, it is important to start a dialogue which will allow an open discussion around how the staff member is coping, the policy on compassionate leave, when they might return to work, and any adjustments that might help with this (eg a phased return).
- Sickness absence leave should not be used as an alternative to compassionate leave. Sickness absence leave is only appropriate for employees who are suffering from a health problem or illness and would apply if the staff member is unable to return to work for health reasons. **Sickness Absence Management**
- As every circumstance will be different, some staff members may feel able to return to work very swiftly, whilst others may need more time. It is often difficult for bereaved staff members to judge how they will feel in the workplace, and a swift return to work does not necessarily mean that a staff member will not need support.
- Consideration should also be given to supporting a member of staff working from home and put in place regular catch ups and support.
- It should be recognised that the full emotional impact of the bereavement may not be felt for some time.
- Regular catch ups will allow the manager and the staff member to discuss and agree strategies or adjustments which may be needed to enable them to return to work and to support them in the workplace after their return.
- Remind the staff member of the **Employee Assistance Programme - Be Supported** for counselling support. Support can be offered over the phone on (Freephone) 0800 0727072 or online at **besupported. (username: Information password: Supported)**
- Be aware that significant days such as anniversary or birthdays can be difficult times and sensitivity around these times, particularly when considering requests for specific days off will help staff members to manage their grief.

In summary , as a manager you need to be able to respond compassionately and professionally when a staff member suffers a loss. Additional resources are available in the Managers guide of the Employee Assistance Programme. \_\_\_\_\_

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