

Glasgow Kelvin College

Finance and Resources Committee Meeting of 1 October 2024

Annual Staff Attendance Report for 01 August 2023 to 31 July 2024

Report by Director of People and Culture

1.0 Introduction

Members will be aware that as part of the College monitoring systems it routinely records staff attendance figures and report these to the Committee.

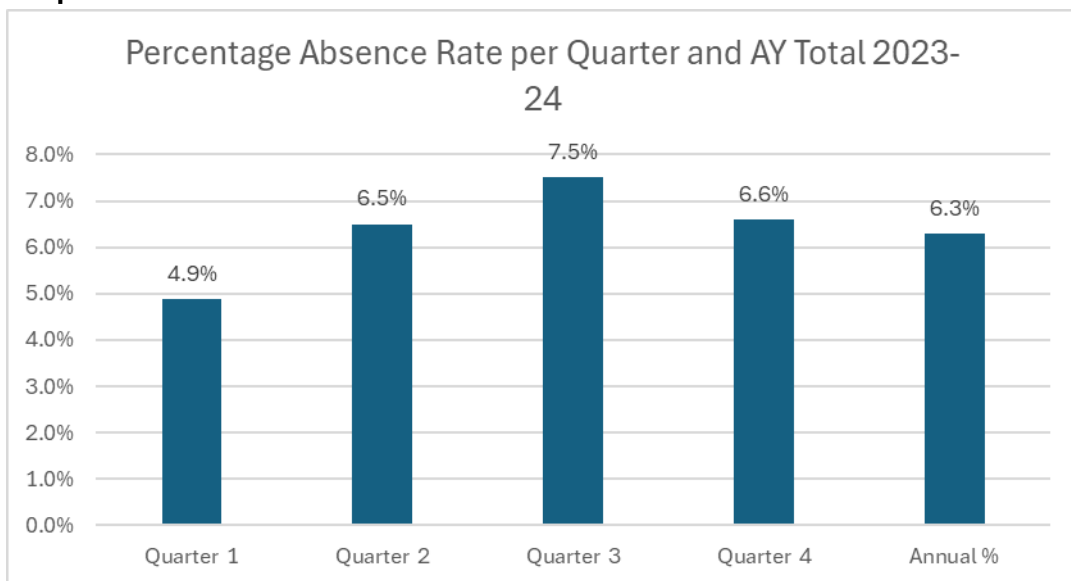
The purpose of this report is to provide annual statistics for academic year (AY) 2023-24, 01 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.

2.0 Attendance Statistics

The attendance and absence information for the College is split into the four main staff groups represented in the College workforce. The allocation is SMT/OMT, Support Staff, Permanent Teaching and Temporary Teaching Staff.

Graph 1 below shows the combined absence statistics for the four staff groups for AY 2023-24 per quarter. The absence percentage increased steadily and peaked in quarter 3 and then the rate decreased in quarter 4. Overall, the absence percentage rate for AY 2023-24 was **6.3%** which is higher than AY 2022-23, 5.0%.

Graph 1



Graph 2 below shows the absence statistics in more detail for the four staff groups for AY 2023-24 relating to each quarter. In quarter four there was a decrease for all staff groups with the largest decrease in percentage being for teaching staff, **1.9%**.

Graph 2

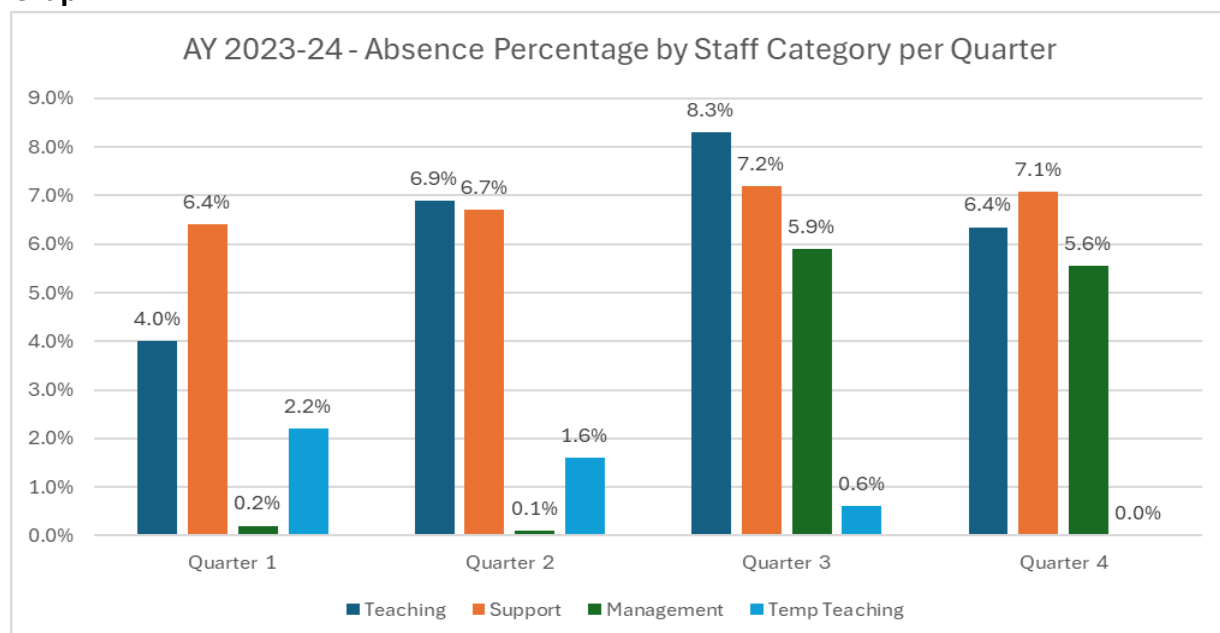


Diagram 1 below shows the absence percentage rate for each category of staff for AY 2023-24. Diagram 2 shows the absence percentage rate for each category of staff for AY 2022-23 for comparison. The absence rate for Temporary Teaching staff for AY 2023-24 decreased in comparison to the previous session, the absence rate for all other staff groups increased in comparison to AY 2022-23.

Diagram 1

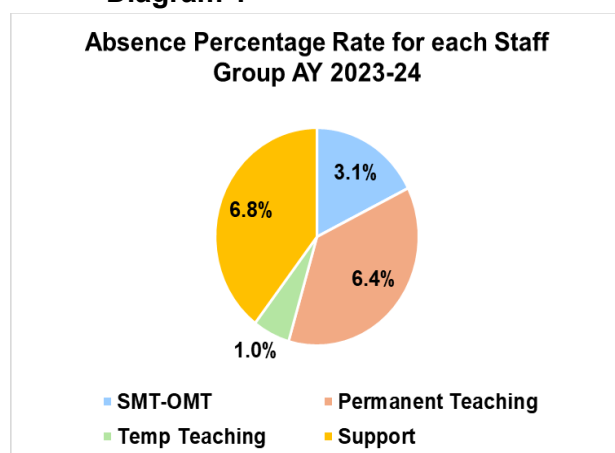
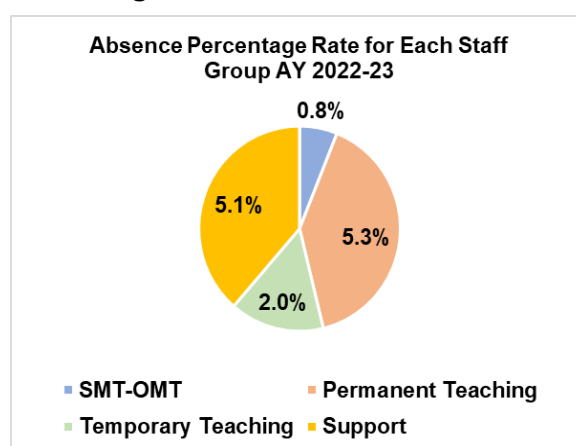
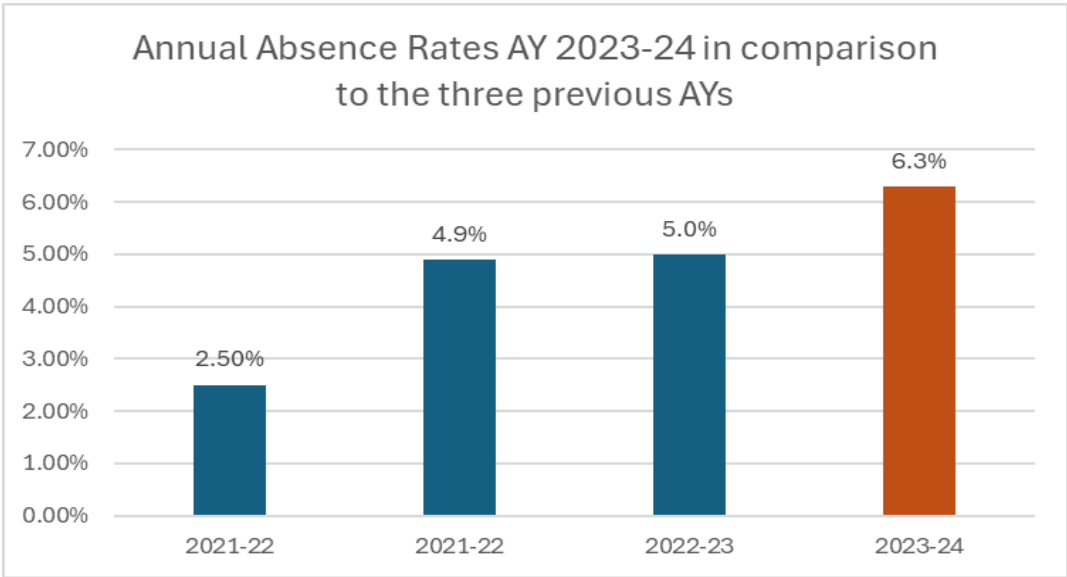


Diagram 2



Graph 3 below shows the absence statistics for the four staff groups for the past three AYs for comparison.

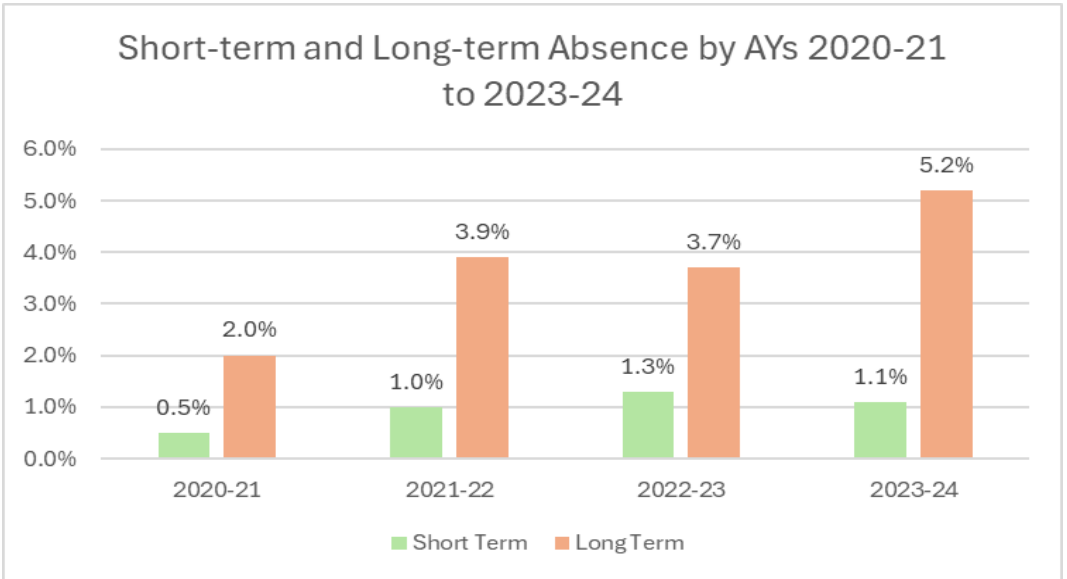
Graph 3



Graph 4 below shows that short-term absence rates have remained fairly static over the past three AYs.

Long-term absence rates however have remained high when comparing the data to the previous three AYs with a significant increase in AY 2023-24 of 1.5%. Long-term absence continues to be the main reason for the high percentage levels of absence at the College.

Graph 4



3 Long-term Absence

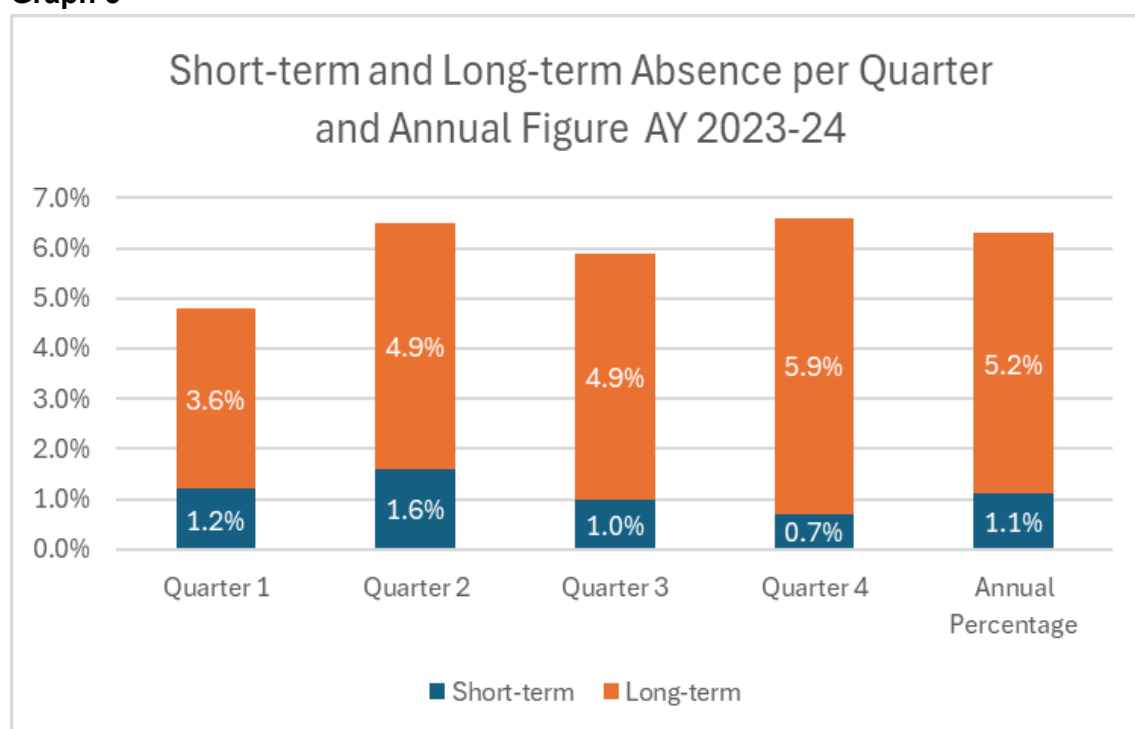
Members will recall that the College regard an absence of 11 days or more as long-term.

During AY 2023-24 there were a total of 62 instances of long-term absence involving 55 employees in comparison to a total of 81 instances, involving 79 employees in AY 2022-23. Whilst the number of instances and people involved decreased in comparison to the previous academic year the total number of days lost increased, AY 2023-24, 5,067 days compared to 3,105 days lost in AY 2022-23.

Of the 55 employees absent long-term in AY 2023-24, one was SMT-OMT, 34 were teaching and 20 support.

Graph 5 below shows the short-term and long-term absence rate per quarter for AY 2023-24, short term absence slightly decreased whereas long term absence increased by 1%. This was attributable to an increase in the number of staff in both the support and teaching staff groups being absent. Long-term absence continues to be the main contributor to the high levels of sickness absence.

Graph 5



4 Mental Health and Wellbeing

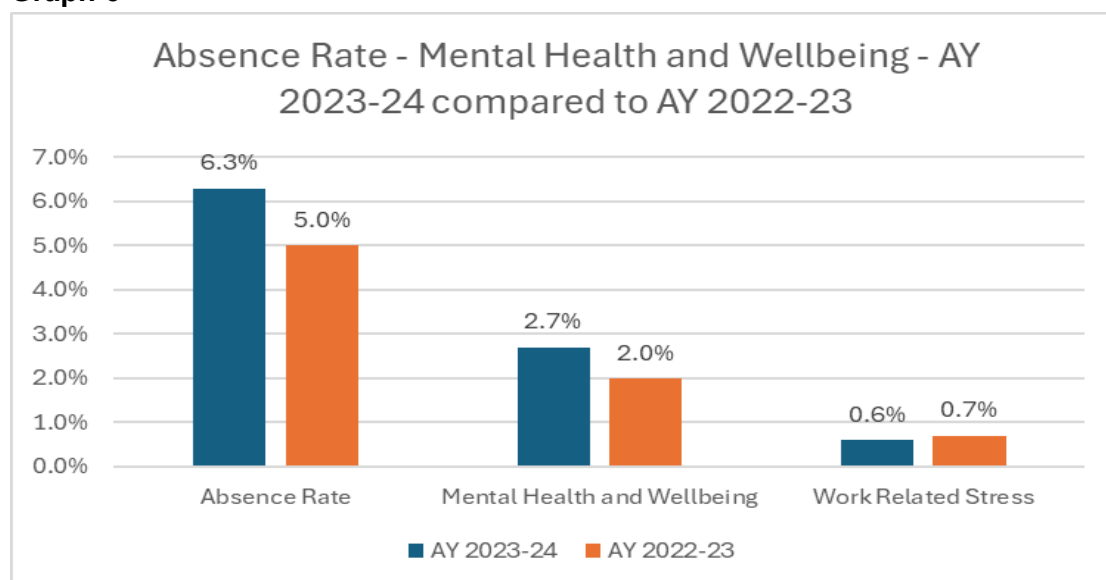
Members will be aware that the College specifically monitors and reports on absence related to mental health and wellbeing, including conditions such as stress (work related or personal), anxiety, depression, bereavement and nervous debility. Wellbeing remains high on the College's agenda.

In AY 2023-24 a total of 2,118 working days were lost due to absences associated with mental health and wellbeing involving 46 employees. In comparison a total of 1,889 working days were lost involving 47 employees in AY 2022-23.

Of the 46 employees, 16 suffered from a diagnosed mental health condition (e.g. anxiety, depression) and 30 experienced poor mental health (e.g. bereavement, stress, personal or work related).

Graph 6 shows that the percentage of absence associated with mental health and wellbeing increased by 0.7% in comparison to the previous AY. The percentage of absence associated with workplace issues decreased slightly by 0.1%. Of the 30 staff who experienced poor mental health, 24 reported issues related to personal matters and six reported issues related to the workplace (three teaching and three support).

Graph 6



Of the 6 staff who reported workplace stressors, five employees have returned to work, and one left the employment of the College. Workplace matters mainly involved changes or decisions related to the individual such as the rejection for a request for voluntary severance or annual leave, a change to working practices and one involved relationship issues between the staff member and their manager which have now been resolved.

The People and Culture Team has continued to promote and support the health and wellbeing of staff. Activities to support health and wellbeing have been led by a workgroup consisting of the Equality and Inclusion Lead, the Sustainability Manager, Wellbeing Officer (Students) and the Active Campus Co-ordinator.

The College offers staff access to an independent employee counselling service, and it also partners with Able Futures and Living Life to the Full.

The College received further funding from the Scottish Funding Council to support its counselling services for students. In addition, the Wellbeing Officer within Student Support Services will be in post until 31 July 2025.

Members may recall that the College created a temporary position specifically to support its large cohort of ESOL students, the Wellbeing (ESOL) Support Officer. This position was shown to have a positive impact on students however the remit of the post was reviewed and revised to ensure it met the wide-ranging needs of students in this area. The College created a new position titled ESOL Student Adviser and Support Officer, and this role now forms part of its permanent staffing structure.

The College continues to have a focus on health and wellbeing for staff and students.

5 COVID

During AY 2023-24 there was a significant reduction in the number of staff absences related to COVID. A total of 28 incidents of COVID were reported, involving 28 staff compared to AY 2022-23 when there was a total of 88 incidents of COVID reported, involving 77 staff.

Of the 28 staff, four worked from home and 24 reported unfit for work. A total of 81 days were lost due to COVID related sickness absence which accounted for 0.1% of the overall 6.3% absence percentage rate, compared to 0.41% in AY 2022-23.

6 CIPD Health and Wellbeing at Work Report 2023

Members will be aware that the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), produce an annual report titled [Health and Wellbeing at Work Report](#) (HWWR) 2023 in partnership with Simplyhealth. The College benchmarks its performance against the annual report to assess how it compares to other public sector organisations. It should be noted that the 2024 report is not yet available.

The HWWR reports the highest absence figure in a decade, however the causes remain the same. The HWWR survey covers private, public sector and non-profit organisations, it reports that the average level of employee absence rose to 7.8 days per employee or 3.4%. While there remains considerable variation between organisations, over a quarter (27%) reported an average absence level of 10 days or more. The College average level of employee absence is 10.4 days per employee.

The HWWR key findings show:

- There are slightly more organisations approaching health and wellbeing through a standalone strategy.

- Senior leaders focus on wellbeing has waned since the height of the pandemic however it remains higher than pre-pandemic years.
- There is a considerable increase in the proportion of line managers buying into the importance of wellbeing, however findings show that a lack of line manager skills and confidence is the top challenge for organisations.
- Mental health remains the most common focus of health and wellbeing activity.
- COVID -19 continues to have some impact.
- Employee assistance programmes continue to be the most common wellbeing benefit offered.

The undernoted sections provide an analysis of the absence data for the College compared the survey data reported in the HWWR.

6.1 Short-term Absence

The HWWR identified the three common causes of short-term absence. These are shown in Table 1 below. It identified minor illness as the most common reason for short-term absence. This is also the most common for the College.

The HWWR identified Musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. neck strain, repetitive strain injury, including back pain) as the second most common reason for short-term absence whereas the College identified COVID-19 as its second most common reason. The HWWR identified Mental Ill Health as its third most reported reason whereas the College identified Poor Mental Health as its third highest reason for short-term absence. Mental Ill Health and Surgery were the fourth joint highest reported reason for long-term absence for the College at 4.7%.

Table 1

AY 2023-24		AY 2022-23	
GKC	HWWR	GKC	HWWR
Minor Illness (70.3% of all short-term absences) (e.g. colds/flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines)	Minor Illness (e.g. colds/flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines)	Minor Illness (e.g. colds/flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines)	Minor Illness (e.g. colds/flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines)
COVID-19(6.6% of all short-term absences) (including confirmed cases, isolation, quarantine, shielding)	Musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. neck strain, repetitive strain injury, including back pain)	Hospital Treatment/Surgery	COVID-19 (including confirmed cases, isolation, quarantine, shielding)
Poor mental health (5.8% of all short-term absences) (non-diagnosed includes, bereavement, low mood, domestic stress, work stressors.	Mental ill health (e.g clinical depression or anxiety)	Poor mental health (non-diagnosed includes, bereavement, low mood, anxiety, domestic stress. Excludes diagnosed mental health conditions)	Musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. neck strain, repetitive strain injury, including back pain)

6.2 Long-term Absence

The HWWR class long-term absence as 20 days or more. It identifies the three most common causes of absence associated with long-term absence, and whilst the College class long-term absence as periods of absence lasting 11 days or more, for the purpose of this report 20 days has been used as the calculator.

The three common causes of long-term absence HWWR identified in the survey are shown in Table 2 below. It identified Mental Ill Health as the most common reported reason for long-term absence. The College identified Poor Mental Health relating to wellbeing as its most common reported reason for long-term absence.

The HWWR identified Musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. neck strain, repetitive strain injury, including back pain) as the second most common reason for long-term absence. The second most common reason for the College was related to Surgery and Hospital Treatment.

Acute Medical Conditions (e.g. stroke, heart attack or cancer) was the third highest identified by the HWWR survey whereas the College identified Mental Ill Health as its third most common reason for long-term absence. The fourth most common reason for the College was Acute Medical Conditions (e.g. stroke, heart attack or cancer at 16.1% of long-term absence.

Table 2

AY 2023-24		AY 2022-23	
GKC	HWWR	GKC	HWWR
Poor mental health (non-diagnosed includes, bereavement, low mood, domestic stress, work stressors. Excludes diagnosed mental health conditions) (22.6% of all long-term absences)	Mental Ill Health (clinical depression, anxiety)	Poor mental health (non-diagnosed includes, bereavement, low mood, domestic stress, work stressors. Excludes diagnosed mental health conditions)	Mental Ill Health (clinical depression, anxiety)
Hospital Treatment/Surgery/Injury (21.0% of all long-term absences)	Musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. neck strain, back injury, including back pain)	Hospital Treatment/Surgery/Injury	Musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. neck strain, back injury, including back pain)
Mental Ill Health (clinical depression, anxiety) (17.7% of all long-term absences)	Acute Medical Conditions (e.g. stroke, heart attack or cancer)	Minor Illness (e.g. colds/flu, stomach upsets, headaches and migraines)	Stress

The College annual percentage for sickness absence using 20 days as the calculator for short-term and long-term absence is 2% short-term and 4.3% long-term. Long-term absence continues to be the main challenge for the College.

7 Cost of Sickness Absence

The direct cost of sickness absence for the College for AY 2023-24 was a total of £989,845.91, these costs do not include the expenditure for additional hours for class cover and agency or temporary staff costs.

8 Overall Analysis of College Data for Absence

The College employed a total of 486 employees during the reporting period. Of the staff employed 227(47%) experienced one or more period of absence due to illness. In comparison to AY 2022-23 where the College employed a total of 524 staff during the reporting period of which 276 (52%) experienced one or more periods of absence due to illness.

An analysis of the overall sickness absence information for the College for AY 2023-24 is detailed below. Information was benchmarked against the HWWR, where data was available.

- An average of 10.4 working days were lost per employee in comparison to an average of 10 days in AY 2022-23. The average reported by the HWWR was 7.8 working days.
- 77% of absence incidents were five days or less which is overall an 3% increase in comparison to AY 2022-23 (74%).
- 4% of absence incidents were greater than five but less than 11 days which is a decrease in comparison to AY 2022-23.
- 19% of absence incidents were long-term which is a decrease of 1% in comparison to AY 2022-23 however whilst the number of incidents decreased the total number of days lost increase by 545.
- Of the staff who were absent on a short-term period of absence Table 3 below shows a significant decrease in the number of staff being absent on one occasion. It also shows however a significant increase in the number of staff being absent on four or more occasions.

Table 3

Instances of absence	AY 2023-24 – Percentage of staff involved	AY 2022-23 Percentage of staff involved	Variance
One period of absence	48%	54%	< 6%
Two periods of absence	28%	27%	> 1%
Three periods of absence	13%	13%	0%
Four or more periods of absence	11%	6%	+ 5%

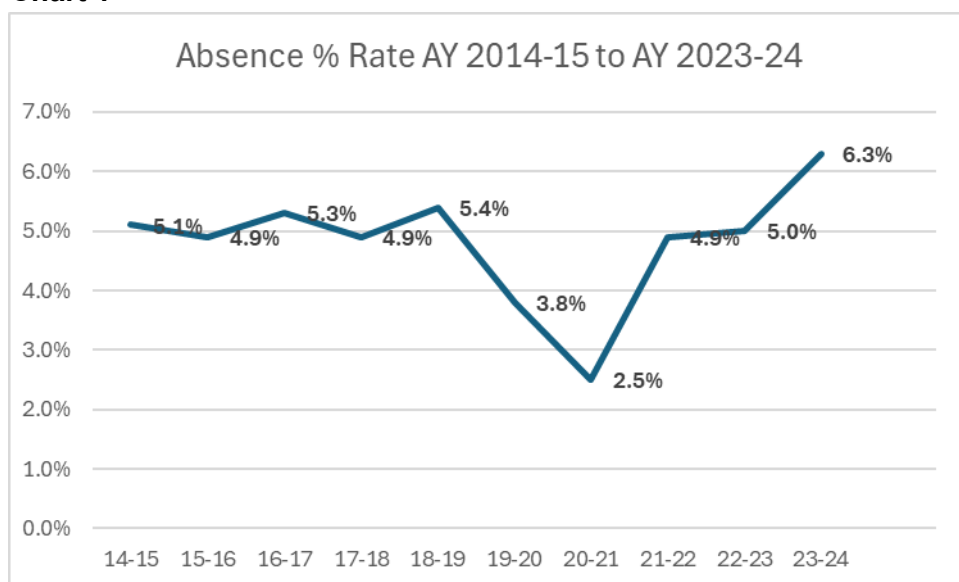
- Of the staff who were absent on a long-term period of absence 86% involved one long term period of absence, a decrease of 7% in comparison to AY 2022-23; 13% involved two periods of long-term absence an increase of 6% and 1% involved three long periods of absence.

The HWWR highlights:

- That almost all organisations (97%) take some steps to manage absence and promote attendance. Like the College most use a combination of approaches to both deter absence (for example, return-to-work interviews, trigger mechanisms to review attendance, disciplinary/capability procedures) and provide support (for example, leave for family circumstances, changes to working patterns or environment, employee assistance programmes and occupational health services).
- Line managers continue to play a key role in managing absence.
- Larger organisations and those in the public sector are more likely to use a wide range of approaches to absence management.
- The majority of organisations reported that they provide line managers with tailored support and some training in absence-handling for short-term absence.

The survey results published in the HWWR confirms calendar year 2023 experienced the highest absence figure in a decade. Chart 1 below shows that the absence percentage rate for AY 2023-24 is the highest experienced by the College since its inception in 2013.

Chart 1



The College recognises the need to understand the reasons for absence, the patterns and the causes. It appreciates that its sickness absence rate is only one indicator of employee health and wellbeing and will consider a range of other metrics to understand what is driving health, absence and attendance.

To achieve this aim, the College will:

- Work in partnership with managers, staff and its recognised Trade Unions to review its Attendance Management and Support Policy and Procedure and associated practice to ensure it encourages good attendance levels; it is flexible enough to support employees with chronic health conditions or disabilities, and appropriate management strategies are in place to reduce absence levels.
- Provide further training and support to ensure that line managers:
 - Are confident in managing staff absence whilst taking a sensitive and supportive manner.
 - Can conduct effective return-to-work interviews and formal interviews.
 - Consider making adjustments for individuals experiencing difficulties at work because of a short-term or long-term health condition.
 - Promote and embed flexible working practices across the College to support those staff with a health condition and/or disability, where/when possible, to assist staff with fluctuating health needs.
- Undertake a monthly analyses of absence reasons to identify patterns and causes in conjunction with line managers.
- Review its providers for Occupational Health and Employee Assistance and seek to work closer with the providers to increase wellbeing provision where possible.

9 Resource Implications

The continued higher rate of sickness absence, particularly associated with teaching staff, has budgetary implications for increased temporary teaching staffing costs.

10 Impact on Students

The significant levels of staff absences could potentially impact on students and service delivery. However, the College is actively managing this with additional hours, temporary staffing and through the application of its Attendance Management and Support Policy.

11 Risk and Assurance

The impact of high levels of staff absence is referenced at 9. and 10. above.

12 Equality and Inclusion

There are no equality implications as a result of this report. Decisions relating to the management of absence associated with a disability is managed within legislative requirements.

13 Data Protection

There are no data protection issues identified as a result of this report. All data presented is aggregated for reporting purposes.

14 Environmental and Sustainability

There are no Environmental and Sustainability implications arising as a consequence of this report.

15 Recommendations

Members of the Finance and Resources Committee are recommended to note:

- i) the content of this report; and
- ii) the planned activities aimed to improve staff attendance levels during AY 2024-25.

16 Further Information

Further information on the content of this report can be obtained from Doreen Shiels, Director of People and Culture Services (dshiels@glasgowkelvin.ac.uk).

Glasgow Kelvin College
DMS
15.09.24