



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

## REHABILITATION OF INJURED EMPLOYEES

### OVERVIEW

The University of Tasmania is committed to continuously improving the management and standards of Occupational Health and Safety. This commitment extends to providing vocational rehabilitation to all employees who sustain an injury or disease arising from their employment. The University of Tasmania accepts its responsibility to take all reasonable steps to achieve the timely and complete physical and psychological rehabilitation of employees who suffer from injury or illness at work.

The University actively promotes safe work practices and undertakes to provide the necessary framework and resources to implement and facilitate return to work programs.

### DEFINITIONS

#### Accountable Person:

An individual, who assumes responsibility for the health or welfare of any other person in a workplace by providing instruction, direction, assistance, advice or service, is deemed an Accountable Person in accordance with the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 1998*. All management and supervisory staff (which includes those with responsibility for students) are therefore considered “accountable persons”.

#### Employee:

For the purposes of this Policy, employee refers to any staff member.

#### Rehabilitation:

Rehabilitation is the process of providing suitable or alternative duties to an injured employee to facilitate their early return to work after sustaining an injury or contracting a disease arising from their employment.

#### Responsible Officer:

Deans, Heads of Division, Heads of School and Administrative Sections have been designated as Responsible Officers under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Accountable Persons:

Ensure these procedures are implemented within their area of responsibility.

- To provide a safe working environment for employees to prevent injury or illness at the workplace.
- To advise employees of changes to Workers Compensation Legislation and employee responsibilities relating to this Legislation.
- To assist with the development and implementation of rehabilitation programs in consultation with the employee, supervisor, rehabilitation co-ordinator, rehabilitation provider and employee representative, to ensure that the rehabilitation program is acceptable to all parties and within the designated legislative guidelines.
- To provide suitable duties for rehabilitation programs.

- To accommodate necessary changes to their workplace so that rehabilitation programs may be carried out.
- To ensure that all employees working under a rehabilitation program are treated fairly and without bias.
- To maintain confidentiality at all times with regard to employees undertaking rehabilitation programs.

#### **Employee Responsibilities:**

Employees shall accept the following responsibilities:

- To take reasonable care in undertaking work tasks which will reduce the risk of work related injury or illness.
- To willingly undertake rehabilitation programs unless medical certification from a registered Practitioner can show they are unable to participate in such a program.
- To immediately, or as soon as practicable, advise their supervisor of any injury or illness they may be suffering which they consider may be work related and which may affect their ability to perform their duties.
- To complete any necessary reporting forms.
- To make reasonable changes to their workplace so that rehabilitation programs may be carried out.
- If claiming workers compensation, to submit new medical certificates before the expiry of their current certificate to ensure continuity of cover.
- To obtain a clearance certificate before returning to their pre-injury position.
- To attend all medical appointments and reviews arranged by the University as requested.
- To advise their rehabilitation provider or the Occupational Health & Safety Unit if they are unable to perform the tasks set out in their rehabilitation program.
- To have the right to choose their own medical practitioner and participate in the selection of a rehabilitation provider.

#### **External Rehabilitation Provider Responsibilities:**

External Rehabilitation Providers shall accept the following responsibilities:

- Identify duties that may be undertaken in a rehabilitation program taking into consideration the nature of the injury.
- To liaise on a regular basis with the employee participating in the rehabilitation program to determine how the rehabilitation program is progressing and make recommendations on any changes that may be necessary.
- Liaise with the Occupational Health & Safety Unit as to the ongoing status of rehabilitation programs.
- Liaise with treating professionals to ensure that rehabilitation programs are consistent with medical recommendations.
- Provide advice as to the most appropriate type of rehabilitation program and its timeframe.
- Provide written reports to the Occupational Health and Safety Unit on the progress/status of rehabilitation programs.
- Give advice on the need for further medical treatment or counselling services as may be required.
- Be involved in review meetings as required.

#### **Occupational Health & Safety Unit Responsibilities:**

The Occupational Health & Safety Unit shall accept the following responsibilities:

- To provide on site rehabilitation services to injured employees and, in cases that require an external rehabilitation provider, consult with that provider in accordance with the Legislation.
- To undertake all administrative duties in connection with rehabilitation programs to ensure Legislative requirements are met as well as ensuring appropriate record keeping.
- To act as co-ordinator/liaison with the School/Section in which the rehabilitation program is taking place.

- To keep Heads of Schools/Sections briefed in relation to rehabilitation plans being undertaken by injured employees in their School/Section.
- To select external rehabilitation providers who can provide the most appropriate care.
- Arrange access to Schools/Sections or other work areas for external rehabilitation providers as necessary.
- To develop or assist with the design and implementation of rehabilitation programs as necessary.

#### **Responsible Officers:**

Provide suitable facilities and resources to ensure the effective implementation of this policy.

- Ensure the current University of Tasmania Rehabilitation Policy is displayed prominently in the workplace.
- Ensure that any work related incident or accident is reported to the Occupational Health & Safety Unit and that any associated paperwork, i.e. Accident and Incident Report Form, is completed by the injured employee.
- Seek the co-operation of employees in the work area when implementing workplace changes to assist in the rehabilitation of an injured employee.
- To ensure that all appropriate persons are aware of any restrictions relating to the work of the rehabilitated employee.
- In consultation with the Occupational Health & Safety Unit, arrange suitable work duties and flexible working hours for rehabilitation participants as required or necessary.
- Advise the Occupational Health & Safety Unit of any absences or deviations from the rehabilitation program as soon as possible.
- Organise and provide relief staff (if necessary) to ensure the School/Section continues to operate efficiently.

#### **PROCEDURE**

The University's primary aim is to ensure that the injured employee is rehabilitated back to their pre-injury position. The following procedures and processes will facilitate the return to work of employees.

##### **1. Identification of the Need for Rehabilitation**

If an employee has been absent from work for more than 14 days and the University is liable to pay compensation, then a rehabilitation program must be commenced in accordance with Legislative requirements. This must be put in place within 5 days after the expiration of the 14 day limit, ie within 19 days of being away from the workplace.

This rehabilitation program is to detail the following:-

- Employees name;
- Employer's name;
- The date the program commences;
- The duties to be undertaken;
- How many hours to be worked per day (if return to work is graded);
- Restrictions on the employee;
- Short-term goals;
- Long-term goals;
- Review date;
- Employee agreement.

##### **2. Appointment of a Rehabilitation Provider**

A rehabilitation provider will be appointed to assess the employee, the workplace and work practices. The provider will, in consultation with all appropriate parties, design a rehabilitation plan outlining suitable, meaningful duties that can be undertaken by the injured employee in the workplace taking into account any restrictions placed on the employee by their medical practitioner.

### 3. Initial Return to Work

A rehabilitation program may be implemented on a graded return to work basis or a modified duties basis, or a combination of both.

A graded return to work means that the program may commence with the employee working less than normal hours per day with the hours increased to full time over a period of weeks. The pace of the increase will depend on the nature and severity of the injury.

A modified duties program is one in which the tasks outlined can be performed by the injured employee, taking into account the restrictions placed on the employee by their medical practitioner. This is usually a modified version of their substantive position.

The rehabilitation provider is responsible for liaising with the employee and assessing their progress within the program. The provider will also be involved in determining whether working hours and or duties can be upgraded and facilitating any special aids necessary for the employee's rehabilitation, ie slope boards, wrist rests etc.

All changes in hours and/or work duties are to be specified in a written rehabilitation program which is prepared by the Rehabilitation Provider and approved by the employee's treating Medical Practitioner. Appropriate training will be given for any alternative duties that are unfamiliar to the employee.

A copy of the rehabilitation program is given to the employee, the Head of School/Section and the Occupational Health & Safety Unit.

### 4. Ongoing Rehabilitation

Liaison between the employee, the Occupational Health & Safety Unit, the Rehabilitation Provider, the Head of School/Section, the Insurer and treating medical practitioners shall be ongoing during the rehabilitation program to ensure that the employee is achieving set goals.

Rehabilitation, as far as practicable, will be provided by the University until the injured employee is able to resume their pre-injury position. In the event that they are unable to resume their substantive position the University will endeavour to provide a modified version of the same position, or where this is not possible, redeployment and as a last resort, employment may be terminated on the grounds of ill health.

### 5. Conclusion of Rehabilitation

When the employee has been cleared by their medical practitioner as being fit for their pre-injury work the rehabilitation program can be finalised.

### 6. Review of Policy and Procedures

In accordance with the criteria set by the Workplace Standards Tasmania this policy shall be reviewed on an annual basis.

## REFERENCES

This policy and procedure has been developed in reference to:-

- *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 1998*

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information relating to the rehabilitation of injured employees is available from the Occupational Health & Safety Unit on 6324 3275.

Approved by OH&S Committee : 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1999

**Disclaimer**

This Policy was designed for use within the University of Tasmania. The University makes no guarantee and assumes no responsibility as to the absolute correctness for all circumstances or for the adaptation outside the University of Tasmania environment