ACADEMIC LEAVE POLICY

1. Introduction

This document describes the University’s policy on leave for academic staff. It does not refer to absence for reasons of sickness, maternity leave or annual holiday entitlement, which are covered in other policy documents.

Manchester 2020 identifies the need to encourage and assist academic staff in becoming increasingly research active. A programme of study leave for all academic staff, linked to a regular assessment of research performance, will address this need.

2. Scope

The policy applies to academic staff except staff on teaching-only contracts or research contracts. Whilst it is recognised that staff holding clinical contracts also have contractual commitments to the NHS, usually amounting to 5 sessions per week, this should not prevent the University from granting academic leave from their programmed activities with the University. Written agreement from the relevant NHS Trust may need to be obtained by the Head of School.

Heads of School/ other organisational unit wishing to consider application of the policy should consult the relevant Faculty Head of Human Resources.

Given the considerable diversity in the nature and support requirements of (and even within) different disciplines, it is neither feasible nor appropriate to be highly prescriptive in devising regulations for the use of academic leave. However, since academic leave constitutes a significant form of staff support, both in terms of its potential benefit to the individual, the School/Faculty and the University, and in terms of its resourcing, it is appropriate to specify its strategic purpose and to outline minimal application/accountability requirements.

3. Aims and Objectives of Academic Leave

Academic leave is paid leave which allows members of academic staff an opportunity for professional development in a way that would not otherwise be possible within the normal course of the academic session. The individual is released from normal duties for a period to undertake research or other forms of professional study.

The aims are to:

- provide a regular opportunity for academic staff to have periods of uninterrupted, focused study;
- provide opportunities to enable a project to get off the ground, to come finally to fruition or to provide an indispensable foundation for future work.

4. Aims and Objectives of the policy

The aims of the policy are to:

- ensure that academic leave is used to maximum effect, within a clear framework of fairness and accountability;
- provide a framework within which Schools/Faculties can encourage staff to make the most of this valuable resource;
• permit flexible management according to local needs and priorities and to protect the principles of both regular entitlement and accountability.

5. Other forms of Leave

The following types of leave do not fall within the definition of academic leave and are not included within this policy:

• **Secondment**, a member of staff may be seconded to another organisation for an agreed period, where there is demonstrable long-term benefit to the member of staff’s career development and to the University.
• **Unpaid leave** is leave which is taken without pay, for instance to carry out paid work for another employer, work unrelated to the individual’s normal work, or time out to take part in some other personal development activity.
• Short absences from the workplace, for example, conference attendance, fieldwork, research collaborations and research at external facilities, for which adequate cover arrangements must always be in place and the head of school made aware of such arrangements in advance. Such absences will normally occur outside the teaching semester or for short periods within a semester.

6. General provisions

a) **Eligibility**

Members of academic staff have the right to apply for academic leave after the appropriate period of service, as defined in paragraph 6 b). This does not prevent Schools from granting more flexible ad-hoc leave arrangements and unpaid study leave may be granted more frequently, subject to its academic value and the staffing needs of the School. Academic leave will not normally be granted to members of staff in their last year of service with the University. Staff on teaching-only contracts or research contracts are not eligible for academic leave.

b) **Qualifying Service**

Members of academic staff may normally apply for academic leave after six semesters, for one semester’s leave, or after six years for one year’s leave, calculated as in paragraph c) below. Qualifying service here refers to service within the University of Manchester (or its legacy institutions), unless supplementary arrangements have been specified in the letter of appointment of the staff member to the University. Academic leave is not an automatic entitlement, is subject to regular assessment of research performance and must be in the University’s interest.

c) **Calculation of service**

Probationary service counts as qualifying service, as do temporary periods of academic service prior to a permanent appointment, where service is continuous. Maternity/adoption leave as part of a period of continuous service will also count, as will absence for reasons of ill health.

Time on bought-out research leave counts towards eligibility to apply for academic leave. However, in the interests of collegiality, the amount of such time that can be counted towards eligibility is normally restricted to one period in seven (i.e. one semester in seven semesters or one year in seven years). Due account will be taken of circumstances where bought-out time has been largely devoted to managerial, rather than research, pursuits.
Time spent on unpaid leave or secondment does not normally count towards eligibility for academic leave.

d) **Probationers**

A probationer may apply for academic leave provided that s/he can meet her/his probationary objectives within the specified probationary period.

e) **Deferral**

It may not always be possible/desirable for staff to apply for, or Schools/Faculties to grant, academic leave in the semester/year in which there is an entitlement to apply. In such circumstances, service after the date of leave entitlement but prior to going on leave will count as credit towards the next application. This process of deferral should allow for credit to be accumulated up to a maximum of three years. Twelve months is the maximum leave period available under this scheme. Where repeated deferral is instigated by the School or Faculty, the applicant shall have recourse to the Appeal procedure outlined the Associated Procedures.

f) **Planning and Location**

In order for individuals to gain maximum benefit from academic leave, there must be a coherent plan of what will be undertaken during the period and where the leave will be taken. Academic leave should demonstrably be intended for a project from which both the individual and the School can profit. This would normally be for original scholarly investigation with a view to publication, but it is recognised that there may be other worthwhile academic objectives for which such a period of uninterrupted time is necessary, e.g. research into major teaching innovations. Leave may be taken at another university, at a commercial establishment or industrial laboratory, within the UK, overseas, at home, within the University, possibly in a different School/Faculty, or in any combination of these locations.

g) **Resourcing**

The academic leave scheme is one of a number of research support opportunities. Members of academic staff are strongly encouraged to seek additional ways of acquiring greater research time, especially by applying for alternative, externally funded awards. Heads of School/unit will seek to assist staff in this, to develop internally resourced, ad hoc leave arrangements in response to research needs, and to consider re-organising teaching and service/administration loads wherever possible to facilitate research.

h) **Supervision and other duties**

Careful attention must be paid to the interests of both academic colleagues and students in the provision of academic leave. Successful applicants should agree with Heads of School what duties need to be completed before going on leave and what duties might need to be discharged during leave. Special care should be paid to the requirements of PhD students to ensure that proper supervision is maintained; this might involve, where appropriate, the introduction of joint supervisory arrangements and/or the retention of some supervisory duties through the period of leave. Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that supervisory standards are maintained.
i) **Communications**

During the period of academic leave members of academic staff must be able to be contacted by the School if required.

j) **Accountability**

The objectives specified in the application for academic leave should provide the framework for a brief Academic Leave Report, to be submitted to the appropriate School panel within three months following return to full duties. The School, with the advice of HR, will determine any action to be taken in the event of an unsatisfactory outcome. If appropriate this could include action under the disciplinary procedure set out in Statute XIII, Part III and its associated Ordinances. The outcome of all awards of academic leave should be included in School/Faculty submissions to the University’s Annual Report. All Academic Leave Reports should be submitted each year to the appropriate Faculty Committee (and, where the project concerns teaching innovations, to the local teaching standards committee). This should provide the opportunity for a regular School/Faculty review of the way in which the academic leave scheme is working.

Where academic leave has been used to acquire a new technique, or to develop a major teaching innovation, the expectation would be that there would be a formal and structured dissemination of the new knowledge through an appropriate forum.