

ACADEMIC LEAVE POLICY

1. Introduction

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. It does not refer to absence for reasons of sickness, maternity leave or annual holiday entitlement, which are covered in other policy documents.

Academic leave, combined with regular developmental assessment of performance serves a strategic purpose for the institution by enabling staff to advance high quality research or to enhance the quality of our teaching and student experience.

2. Scope and purpose of academic leave

The policy applies to academic and research staff with an open-ended contract. Externally funded research staff are not eligible due to the nature of their contracts. Staff with clinical contracts also have contractual commitments to the NHS, usually amounting to 5 sessions per week, but 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.

The individual is released from normal duties for a period to undertake research or other forms of professional development and enhancement. The aims are to:

- provide a regular opportunity for 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.

3. Other forms of leave for professional development

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.

4. Aims and Objectives of the Academic Leave 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.

It is neither feasible nor appropriate to be highly prescriptive in devising regulations for the use of academic leave given the considerable diversity in the nature and support requirements of (and even within) different disciplines. 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.

Guidance for Heads of School or other organizational units on the implementation of this policy is available [here](#).

5. General provisions

a) Eligibility

Academic leave is not an automatic entitlement, is subject to regular assessment of performance and must be in the University's interest.

Academic and research staff with an open-ended contract have the right to apply for academic leave after the appropriate period of qualifying service. Externally funded research staff are not eligible due to the nature of their contracts. Academic leave will not normally be granted to members of staff in their last year of service with the University.

Schools may grant more flexible ad-hoc leave arrangements or unpaid leave, subject to its academic value and the staffing needs of the School.

b) Qualifying Service

Academic staff may normally apply for one semester's leave after six semesters, or one year's leave after six years. Qualifying service here refers to service within the University of Manchester, unless supplementary arrangements have been specified in the letter of appointment of the staff member to the University.

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 also counts. 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 and leadership, rather than research or teaching, pursuits.

Time spent on unpaid leave or secondment does not normally count towards eligibility for academic leave.

d) Probationers

A probationer who is on course to complete their period of probation successfully may apply for academic leave during the final year of their probationary period, with the period of academic leave scheduled during the following year.

e) Deferral

It is not always possible or 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 in 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 initiating or completing a major research project, for example to prepare a major research funding application or to prepare outputs for publication, but there may be other worthwhile academic objectives for which such a period of uninterrupted time is necessary, e.g. research into major teaching innovations, or projects designed to enhance teaching and student experience. While on leave the individual may be based at another university, at a commercial establishment or industrial laboratory, within the UK, overseas, working remotely on campus within the University, possibly in a different School/Faculty or in the Institute for Teaching and Learning, or in any combination of these locations.

g) Resourcing

The academic leave scheme is one of a number of staff support opportunities. Members of academic staff are strongly encouraged to seek additional ways of acquiring greater development time whether it be for research or teaching development, 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 this.

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.

All Academic Leave Reports should be submitted each year to the Faculty Committee, for teaching or research as appropriate. 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.

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