

# ACADEMIC LEAVE POLICY - GUIDANCE

* 1. **INTRODUCTION**

The University’s [Academic Leave Policy](http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=7) gives eligible academic staff the right to apply for a period of one semester’s academic leave after six semesters of qualifying service, or for one year’s academic leave after six years. 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, enabling them to advance high quality research or to enhance the quality of our teaching and student experience.

While there is a right to apply, there is no right to take or to be granted academic leave. Expectations and decisions on academic leave are set and taken locally by Schools, within the framework of the University policy. Decisions will depend on the quality of the proposal and the potential outcome; affordability and capacity to cover other duties during the period of leave; and the anticipated benefits for both the University and the individual concerned.

# FAIRNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

Academic leave is a significant form of staff support which can enhance career progression and staff satisfaction. The University benefits insofar as this investment enhances our research, research impact, and teaching. To maximise these benefits, and the strategic advantages of academic leave for the School, Faculty and University, academic leave must operate within a context of fairness and transparency. It follows that:

* Academic leave must be advertised effectively, so all eligible colleagues are aware of the opportunity.
* The process for applications, while determined locally, must operate within the framework of the University’s Academic Leave Policy and of this guidance.
* Decision-making must be transparent, and those making decisions must have regard to equality of opportunity for staff on different contract types and at different career stages.
* There should be a clear process for the post-award evaluation of leave outcomes, with feedback and integration into annual review.
* Each School should develop a framework for the strategic use of academic leave opportunities, linked to local and Faculty planning.

# PROCEDURES

* 1. **Applications**

Each School will develop and publicise a clear timetable for the receipt and consideration of applications for academic leave, and for feedback to applicants. A member of academic staff wishing to be considered for academic leave should submit a written application to the Head of School for consideration by the appropriate decision-making committee. Each School or Faculty should develop forms or templates for applications and for post-leave reports. Link to exemplar templates as some excellent examples already exist]. The Head of School is responsible for reporting on the academic leave process, including applications and outcomes by contract type, to the Dean, who will in turn report annually to the July meeting of HRSC.

Each School or Faculty will determine its own timetable for the submission and consideration of applications. However, to optimise the benefits from academic leave, consideration should be given to planning and flexibility in the use of leave schemes:

The application process should be designed to enable academic leave to be granted sufficiently far ahead to allow academics to make plans for extended international visits during academic leave, where this is appropriate to the activity being considered. Such arrangements involve both professional and personal planning and need substantial notice if they are to be used strategically.

* Schools are also encouraged to consider applications for part-time academic leave, to allow
* colleagues to continue with important leadership roles while relinquishing other duties during the relevant period. More flexibility in developing different models for academic leave is likely to improve parity of access to the scheme.

There may need to be prioritisation among applications which all merit an award of academic leave, but which cannot all be granted in the same period. Criteria for success and for prioritisation should be decided and advertised locally, within the scope of the Academic Leave Policy.

Each area will configure its own requirements for applications, but these should include:

1. an outline of the project or programme of work
2. a statement of the objectives of the proposed project
3. a realistic timetable of what it is hoped to achieve during the period of leave
4. an indication of the expected outcomes (e.g. journal articles – including an indication of the likely journal(s), book, computer program, new degree programme, teaching innovation etc).
5. details of the applicant’s teaching, supervisory, administrative and where appropriate, clinical duties
6. a summary of any previous academic leave from this University (or its predecessors), which must include any outcomes.
7. Details of any external funding obtained/applied for.

Potential applicants should take the opportunities offered within the School, for example performance and development review procedures, to discuss ways in which the academic leave scheme might be appropriate to their career development and to obtain assistance in developing their proposals.

The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that appropriate cover is in place for teaching and administrative/service duties during proposed periods of absence on academic leave. Schools should make it clear in their local guidance what duties (such as doctoral supervision, consultation by the Head of School on urgent matters, or attendance at specific crucial meetings or events) should normally continue during periods of academic leave.

All applicants should be offered feedback on their applications, and advice from a relevant senior colleague to support future applications. Schools should also give consideration to arranging or assigning an academic mentor or ‘coach’ to support academics in planning for their academic leave, and/or progressing their plans while they are on leave.

Successful applicants may request a change in the timing of their academic leave should their circumstances change. Such requests can be granted only when duties can be covered appropriately within the School on the revised timetable.

# Review

All staff returning from academic leave are required to submit a short report to the appropriate School panel on what has been achieved during the leave period. Reports must be submitted within three months of return from the period of leave. The length of the report should be consistent with the duration of the leave. Reports should focus on the objectives set out in the original application, and on how far those objectives have been achieved. Reports will be evaluated and feedback provided. The outcome of these reports should be considered during annual review meetings, and taken into account in future applications for academic leave.

Faculties will play an important role in reviewing the operation of the academic leave scheme in their Schools, considering parity, consistency and strategic benefit. Each School will submit an annual report setting out the applications for academic leave, those granted (including an EDI analysis), and a summary of assessments of individual reports completed. These will be reviewed by each Faculty, and reported to the July meeting of HRSC.

# Teaching applications

In previous iterations of the Academic Leave Policy, the scheme has only variably been open to colleagues on teaching contracts. Colleagues with either a research and teaching contract, or a teaching contract, now have a right to apply. However, colleagues on either contract type can make applications for academic leave which are focused on enhancements to our teaching and student experience.

The Institute for Teaching and Learning can support Schools in considering and evaluating teaching applications, which will typically be focused on enhancements to our teaching and student experience. This support will involve:

* The development of criteria for successful teaching-focused applications for academic leave, to be agreed by TLG Executive.
* Evaluation of relevant applications for each School, and provision of recommendations.
* Acting as ‘host’ for successful applicants during their academic leave, through the award of Fellowships of the Institute, providing access to support, development opportunities, cross- University communities of practice and sector networking relevant to each application.
* Linking the outcomes of successful projects to cases for Fellowship, including Senior and Principal Fellowship as appropriate, of the HEA.
* Consideration and comment on post-leave reports.

# Appeals

Where an academic leave application is rejected or amended, the applicant may appeal to the Dean, who may delegate to the appropriate Faculty Committee. An appeal should normally be made in writing within 10 working days of the rejection or amendment. Both the Head of School and the applicant should have the right to present their respective cases.

Documentation for any appeal should consist of a copy of the original application, the written statement of the reasons for rejection and any additional statement that the applicant wishes to make in support of the appeal. Appeals should normally be considered within one month of receipt, and the outcome normally conveyed to the applicant, in writing, within five working days of the decision being made.

It is expected that most cases will be resolved at Faculty level. However, in recognition that there may be exceptional cases where resolution proves impossible, there should be provision for further consideration at University level. In such cases appeal may be made to the Vice-President for Research or the Vice-President for Teaching, Learning and Students. The decision of the Vice- President, advised by the Director of HR, shall be final and binding on all parties.

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