

# School of Social Sciences

## Academic Research Leave

## Policy & Procedures

### Academic Research Leave Policy for Staff on Teaching and Research Contracts

#### Eligibility

The following criteria will be employed:

1. The University Policy is that academic staff have the right to apply for Academic Leave (previously known as sabbatical) on the basis of '1 after 6' semesters and it further states that "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." From October 2020 the University extended academic leave to colleagues on a teaching contract. Although SoSS had included those on teaching contracts from 2016. Colleagues on either a teaching and research contract or teaching and scholarship or a teaching only contract can make applications for academic leave which are focused on enhancements to teaching and student experience. The School of Social Sciences now have a separate policy for staff on teaching contracts.
2. 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.
3. Staff who are eligible to apply, as above, but whose current post/appointment is underpinned by (fixed term) temporary external funding explicitly designed to resource teaching obligations within the School/Department (e.g., a research buy-out), may also apply provided additional resource can be made available, or re- allocated, to meet the

existing teaching obligations. In such cases, the line manager will advise the member of staff.

A member of the School's academic staff who is eligible under the above policy and who has completed a minimum period of three years' service in a leadership role (HoD, Director roles) may be granted an additional semester of academic research leave (i.e. over and above that to which s/he is normally entitled to apply). However, this is not an entitlement and will only be awarded at the discretion of the Head of School.

- The University policy is available via StaffNet:- [Academic leave policy](#) and [Academic leave procedures](#)

#### Expected Duties

The expected duties during academic leave, should include:

- Doctoral supervision. However, where possible adjustments should be made during academic leave (or within the post-academic leave workload allocation) for staff with a large number of doctoral students;
- Staff are expected to continue to manage the funded research projects which they lead (PI or Co-I);
- Staff should be available for consultation on strategically significant issues subject to advance notice;
- Staff should be relieved from other teaching and administrative duties where possible, including academic advising. It is possible to grant "one semester's leave" distributed over two semesters, but with appropriate reduction in workload over the whole year, if this is the most effective structure for both the applicant and Department/ School.

#### Deferral and Accumulation

Academic leave may be deferred so that more than a semester of leave might be applied for. In most cases, deferring leave in order to accumulate leave will not be sanctioned. However, applications to do so will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and will include situations such as maternity leave, externally funded research leave or serving a term of office in a leadership role in a School, Faculty or the University.

### Academic Leave Principles & Procedures

#### Principles

Assuming the eligibility criteria have been met, the responsibility for "managing" academic leave applications and evaluating post-leave reports rests with the appropriate Department, which is required to report to the School Research Director as described in the following School procedures:

- School, via the Departments, should ensure that staff are supported to plan and develop high quality academic leave proposals through discussion in PDR and mentoring;

- Proposals from staff who are employed on Teaching & Research contracts would normally address a significant area of research, or research development, to be undertaken that is consistent with the research objectives of the post, as described (for example) in the relevant job description, but as in point 1 can be focused on enhancements to teaching and the student experience and should follow this route;
- The recommendations for leave rest with the HoD;
- Applications and HoD recommendations will be submitted, via the Research Support Manager, to the School Research Committee (SRC) for approval and record keeping;
- The academic is required to submit a post-leave report within 3 months of the end of the leave period;
- Post-leave reports will be reviewed by the HoD and submitted to SRC (via the Research Office) for final sign-off by SRC;
- A written evaluation of the academic leave period should be provided to the individual by their HoD. Both report and evaluation should be submitted to SRC via the School Research Manager for School records and “sign-off” at SRC. An unsatisfactory post-leave report can provide the basis for refusing future academic leave applications. If such a situation arises, the Department/School will provide support to enable an improved research performance before the submission of another application.

### **Advance applications**

Advance applications will be considered where this is to enable an academic to plan the logistics for their leave to involve an extended stay outside the UK in line with our internationalisation strategy (logistics can include one or more of the following: external funding for a fellowship, arrange an institutional visiting position, coordinate with a leave application being made by their spouse/partner, arrangements for taking their children etc.)

### **Procedures and Documentation**

Each Department should adopt the following procedures (adapted for local needs):

- At the start of each Academic Session (late September) the Research Support Manager will invite eligible members of staff to apply for academic leave, providing details of (or links to) the University Policy and Procedural documents, a copy of the School Policy & Procedures (this document) and timetable for both the local/Department application process and the evaluation of post-leave reports. Colleagues inform HoDs of their intention to apply for academic leave in the following year;
- Applications are submitted, using the application form provided and accompanied by a current CV, to the Research Support Manager for eligibility check;
- When eligibility is confirmed applications are passed to HoDs for consideration by the Department and, if appropriate, provisional approval of the application;
- Applications are then forwarded to SRC (via research office) for approval;

- HoDs are notified of outcome from SRC by the Research Support Manager;
- The PA to the Head of School will then send letters to applicants with the decision.

## Application

In accordance with University Policy, the academic research leave [application](#) should collect the following information:

- A current CV;
- An outline of the project or programme of work. This should contain a brief, one-paragraph outline of your long-term research or work agenda, highlighting those aspects you intend to work on during the academic leave period (the short term agenda);
- A statement of the objectives of the proposed project. This should be a one-page (approximately) description of the research and/or other important work you intend to carry out during the period of academic leave. Further, explain in a couple of short paragraphs how an extended period with focusing on this work, and with minimal time spent on other activities, will advance your research agenda and how it will enhance the Departments and/or Schools standing in research and/or teaching; including contribution to REF and other strategic priorities;
- An indication of the expected outcomes and a realistic timetable of what it is hoped to achieve during the period of leave. Provide a list of outputs (for example, publications, research funding/fellowship applications, a major externally funded grant application and so), with approximate dates) you expect to produce during your academic leave period. The post-leave report will be expected to contain evidence that these outputs have been delivered. While it is accepted that research plans may alter during the period of academic leave, it is expected that overall deliverables will be similar to the ones originally proposed;
- Details of your teaching, supervisory, administrative and other duties. Provide a list of current duties and “suggestions” of how these can be covered by other colleagues, if necessary;
- A summary of any previous academic leave from this University (or its predecessors), which must include any outcomes. Provide the dates of previous leave with outcomes listed aside, and explain why it is essential to have academic leave now as opposed to one year later. This may come from your summary report which you handed in following your previous academic leave period;
- Details of any external funding obtained/applied for.

## Post-Academic Leave Report

The post-academic leave report form should detail outcomes against the plans presented in the application proposal, allowing for productive deviations to be reported as a success.

- The date for post-academic leave reports will be agreed in advance.
- The report should be submitted to the HoD for review.
- HoD then submits to SRC (via the Research Officer) for final approval and sign-off.

First version: September 2012 Revised and approved by SPRC: November 2014  
Revised and approved by Chair's Action: October 2016 revised and approved by  
Chair's Action: Revised and Approved by SPRC: March 2023.