

# University Study Leave Scheme

## University Policy

The University recognises the substantial benefits that can accrue to individuals, Schools, and the University as a consequence of academic staff having regular periods of study leave. Study leave is a sustained period of time (usually 3 months or longer) in which the normal duties of a member of academic staff are wholly or substantially reduced with the approval of the Head of School. Such leave is essential to maintain the vitality and creativity required for successful and original teaching, scholarship and research throughout an academic career. It is used principally for the purposes of one or more of:

- Research
- Scholarship
- Preparation of teaching materials
- Re-training
- Learning new skills

The University's policy is that it is reasonable for a member of the academic staff to expect study leave for one term in nine (or its equivalent). This expectation should not be regarded as an entitlement and the proposals made for the study leave must:

1. Satisfy the academic requirement of the School
2. Be financially acceptable to the School
3. Contain measurable objectives that can be assessed

In general, the University expects that the financial arrangements for study leave will be broadly neutral because the costs will be covered either by the internal rearrangement of teaching and other duties within a School, or by the purchase of replacement staff from money awarded for that purpose. The University wishes to encourage staff to secure external funding for study leave because it normally brings with it both additional flexibility for full replacement of duties, and kudos for the individual and the University.

## School/Department arrangements

The University understands that the practical implementation of its policy for study leave is dependent on local conditions. All Schools must have an appropriate scheme in place. The scheme should contain the following statements:

## **1. School policy on study leave:**

This is the University policy amended appropriately for local circumstances. Issues to consider include:

- Whether the scheme will operate essentially on a flexible rota basis with some selective criteria or on the basis of combined eligibility and selective criteria.
- Whether there should be a minimum period of service before a member of academic staff is eligible to apply for study leave. The University expects that study leave will not normally be awarded until 9 terms have been served and any probationary requirement satisfactorily met.
- How the scheme will be implemented in relation to academic part-time staff. Some part-time academic staff are expected to undertake the full range of academic duties but on a proportional basis while others are expected only to undertake a specified range of duties. Moreover, some staff working on a proportional basis do so because they wish to use the remainder of their time to participate regularly in those activities that could only be undertaken by full-time staff while on study leave.
- Whether externally funded study leave is dealt with in the same way as internally funded leave. Some Schools treat these in the same way (allowing for the fact that most externally funded leave is for a year), while others regard the external funding as additional to the University's policy. In both cases there should be a statement as to the maximum time that can be spent away from the University.
- It is important that Heads of School are able to plan ahead. Schools will need to determine an appropriate timetable for the submission and assessment of applications, in order to ensure that replacement teaching and other cover can be arranged.

## **2. School procedures for approving study leave.**

'Most Schools use their Research Committee to approve applications for leave for purposes of scholarship and/or research. Study leave for other purposes is often at the discretion of the Head of School. Heads of Schools should be involved in any prioritisation process and must make the final decision about the granting of study leave because of their responsibility for the proper functioning (academic and financial) of all aspects of the School. Applications for study leave should contain measurable objectives. All decisions regarding study leave (including conditions to be satisfied etc.), should be notified to the applicant in writing.

In the event of an application not receiving study leave because of a perception of improper process being followed, the applicant may ask the appropriate Dean to investigate. If you've never used styles before, search Word's help system for a brief explanation.

### 3. School procedures for assessing the use made of the study leave.

All staff should submit a formal report within an agreed time following the period of leave to the relevant School Committee/Group. The report should detail the work undertaken against the objectives agreed by the Head of School in approving the period of study leave. The report should be evaluated and the evaluation passed to the appropriate Board for Research or Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning. An unsatisfactory report will be noted and may endanger future requests for study leave.

## Issues for Heads of Schools in implementing study leave arrangements

Effective schemes often require the use of money to purchase the fullest possible relief of staff from their normal duties. This can be achieved through the use of School money (e.g. from research overheads and overseas student incentive payments) and the specific scheme operate by the Research Board in Arts and Humanities.

A pre-requisite of many effective schemes of study leave is that flexible teaching schedules exist. This may be achieved either by having several staff contributing to a unit who can share some elements of teaching (often most appropriate in year 1 units), or units that are not taught every year (i.e. directed student choice within a group of units such as frequently occurs in year 3) or both.

In the context of the general policy of the University, Heads will need to take account of some or all of the following issues when considering applications for study leave:

- The overall benefits of the proposed programme of work during the period of study leave to the individual and School
- Any duties that will still be required during the period of study leave. Ideally, full relief of normal duties should be arranged but this is not always possible. Arrangements for the marking of assessments and examinations, and the care of personal tutees must be clear. Normally the teaching and administrative element of normal duties should occupy no more than 40 hours of a 3-month study leave. Staff on study leave should, wherever possible, prepare material to pass on to colleagues who will be doing their teaching.
- The arrangements for the supervision of postdoctoral researchers and postgraduate research students and the fulfilment of obligations required by ongoing research grants and contracts.
- The reporting arrangements for outputs of study leave that are outside the typical range of research and scholarship (e.g. exhibitions, web-based outputs).

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