



# Sabbatical Leave Policy and Procedures

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## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Ulster University fully appreciates and upholds the value of sabbatical leave for the purposes of individual career development and, as a consequence, for the enhancement of the University's academic reputation.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Sabbatical Leave Policy is therefore to enable the University to successfully achieve its academic excellence priorities as set out in the Five & Fifty Strategic Plan:
  - To enable academic/research staff to have dedicated time to focus on research and other academic excellence activities;
  - To ensure that academics/researchers are supported in their research career development;
  - To respond and contribute to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and to the enhancement of taught provision; and
  - To enhance the University's academic reputation.
- 1.3 Hence, periods of sabbatical leave will enable an individual to develop personally, whilst delivering clear research outputs and teaching enhancements that are of benefit to the University.
- 1.4 This policy defines the nature and role of sabbatical leave, the parameters within which academic/research staff may access this leave and the process to be followed when applying for sabbatical leave.

## 2.0 Definition

- 2.1 Sabbatical leave is defined as a form of paid leave that is free from all teaching and administrative duties (including the supervision of any staff brought in to cover these duties) and that is used to undertake research or other academic excellence activities, which will result in outputs as agreed in the plan presented in the **Sabbatical Leave Application Form**.
- 2.2 Contractual payments will normally continue during the period of sabbatical leave.

## 3.0 Scope and Eligibility

- 3.1 The Sabbatical Leave policy is an inclusive process and applies to all academic/research staff (both full-time and part-time) who have completed their period of probation.
- 3.2 Staff in their final year of service will not normally be eligible to apply for sabbatical leave.
- 3.3 Staff who hold a contract with another University or academic institution are not eligible to apply for sabbatical leave.
- 3.4 Staff who have been granted a sabbatical within the current REF cycle period are then not eligible to apply for a further sabbatical within the same cycle period.

## 4.0 Duration and Timing of Leave

- 4.1 Sabbatical leave will be for a duration of 16 weeks and must begin on day one of teaching in any semester.

## 5.0 Application Procedure

- 5.1 There will be an annual call for sabbatical leave and applications will only be considered during this period. An individual's aspirations for sabbatical leave and its intended outcomes should be discussed as part of the professional development discussion within the annual appraisal and development procedure.
- 5.2 Requests for sabbatical leave must be made using the **Sabbatical Leave Application Form**. Completed forms must be submitted to the relevant Head of School by the stated deadline.

## 6.0 Criteria

In assessing applications for sabbatical leave, consideration will be given to the proposed activities and outcomes of the sabbatical leave and how these will contribute to:

- Making a 'step change', delivering impact or adding value to the applicant's research or teaching;
- The furtherance of the applicant's career;
- The successful implementation of the University's Five & Fifty Strategic Plan; and
- The School's academic excellence priorities in relation to REF and teaching excellence.

## 7.0 Authorisation and Approval

- 7.1 The Head of School will consider the application form in consultation with the relevant Research Director/Associate Dean R&I or Associate Dean Education, taking due account of the timing of the proposed sabbatical leave and the potential need to cover the teaching, administrative and other duties detailed by the applicant in the application form. Suitable arrangements must be in place to facilitate PhD progress monitoring requirements (e.g. 100-day viva, confirmation of PhD) and project reporting. It is expected that this will normally involve a joint-supervisor agreeing to undertake these duties on behalf of the PhD supervisory team and the project delivery team respectively.

- 7.2 The Head of School and relevant Research Director/Associate Dean R&I or Associate Dean Education will make recommendations on each application to Faculty Executive Committee. The Head of School and relevant Research Director/Associate Dean R&I or Associate Dean Education will include a full breakdown of estimated costs to ensure that appropriate resourcing from within faculty budgets is applied in all instances to allow individuals to avail of sabbatical leave. Only where appropriate cover has been identified and authorised, will the sabbatical leave be approved.
- 7.3 Faculty Strategic Academic Excellence Plans will seek to identify sabbatical leave priorities and the provision of cover for sabbatical leave.
- 7.4 Faculty Executive Committee will be expected to ensure that the number of staff absent on sabbatical leave at any given time does not exceed what is appropriate to the Faculty's size and core operational needs.
- 7.5 Feedback will be made available to unsuccessful applicants upon request.

## 8.0 Outcomes of Sabbatical Leave

- 8.1 By the end of a period of sabbatical leave, academic/research staff are expected to have produced tangible outcomes in furtherance of their research/teaching career and the reputation of the University.
- 8.2 A report containing evidence of the outcomes produced during the period of sabbatical leave, as set out in the Sabbatical Leave Application Form, must be submitted to the Head of School within one month of the end of the period of sabbatical leave.
- 8.3 The expected outcomes from the period of sabbatical leave will form part of any current or future appraisal and development procedures. As such, failure in their delivery will be considered in this context. Failure to deliver expected outputs (without extenuating circumstances) will also preclude a further sabbatical.
- 8.4 An annual meeting co-chaired by the DVC (Research and External Affairs) and DVC (Academic) and involving the Executive Deans will take place to review the outcomes of staff returning from sabbaticals as well as review the staff list approved for sabbaticals in the following year.
- 8.5 An overall report will be submitted annually to both SLT and RIC.

## 9.0 Equality Statement

The University is committed to equality of opportunity in academic careers and the Sabbatical Leave Policy provides the opportunity for each member of staff to apply, (subject to the criteria above), for one term of sabbatical leave.

This policy is currently undergoing equality screening and will continue to be subject to ongoing equality screening during the lifecycle of the sabbatical policy to ensure equality of opportunity.

## 10.0 Contact Details

Academic/research staff interested in discussing sabbatical leave further should contact their Head of School and/or Research Director to arrange a joint meeting.