

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON RESEARCH LEAVE FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

[Approved by Court June 2009]

Introduction

- 1 The University's research objective is to improve its competitiveness as an international research driven university committed to research of the highest quality. Improving research quality through publications, research income and research partnerships is central to achieving our ambition to be a world-leading university.
- 2 Research leave may be used, for example, to visit other research centres for collaborative work, undertake overseas visits to learn new approaches or consult with rare material, to allow time for the completion of articles or monographs, or field work that generates new scholarship. Research leave is often funded externally to allow teaching to be replaced and families to travel. Research leave can also permit the development of knowledge transfer, for example by working with industry, further developing the proof of concept, or growing a spin-out company.
- 3 The University recognises the value of research leave in achieving its ambitions for research quality. There are also many examples where a period of research leave has a huge positive effect on a research career. Therefore as part of the development of research excellence, the University encourages research leave where it will enhance the quality and range of research or knowledge transfer activities and assist staff to be eligible for consideration under national assessment exercises of research excellence. The introduction of this Policy on Research Leave for Academic Staff reinforces this commitment.

Policy on Research Leave for Academic Staff

- 4 All academic staff (including those on probation) are normally entitled to request research leave, subject to having submitted a satisfactory research plan to the Head of School.
- 5 The Policy seeks to ensure that all Colleges operate a transparent research leave scheme with effect **from 1 September 2009** onwards and sets out the framework within which the scheme should operate.

6 General principles

- A College research leave scheme must operate in a transparent fashion, within a framework of fairness and accountability
- Research leave constitutes a significant form of staff support both in terms of its potential benefit to the individual, the School, College and University
- Allocation of research leave must take into account the research priorities and strategic objectives of the University, College and School, the individual's research plans as well as particular operational requirements, recognising that in some instances leave may be used to initiate new areas of investigation
- The granting of leave is normally at the discretion of the Head of School taking into account the wider operational and strategic environment within the College, particularly in terms of replacement teaching
- Duties of those on research leave should be negotiated and agreed with the School concerned
- The application for leave must clearly state the expected benefits, the manner in which it will be organised and any expected outputs

- The main criteria for assessing the application will be the expected benefits for the individual, School, College or University in terms of research, knowledge transfer or commercialisation activities and outputs (recognising that not all research leave will lead directly to outputs), the quality and standing of the proposed host institution may also be taken into consideration
- Although not always a prerequisite, staff should be strongly encouraged to seek external funding to support the period of research leave and Colleges may give priority to applicants who have secured such funding.

7 Operational Aspects

- All Colleges must have a published statement on research leave for academic staff, details of which are readily available to staff
- Applications for leave, normally submitted at least **twelve months** ahead of the proposed start date, should be made to the appropriate Head of School in the first instance, but may also be considered by the relevant College. Colleges are free to decide the content of the application which should, as a minimum, clearly state the expected benefits, the manner in which it will be organised and any expected outputs. Applications should also address duties which would be continued during the period of leave and those where alternative arrangements would be required, e.g. PhD supervision, committee membership etc. Applications submitted within twelve months of the proposed research leave date may be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- A rearrangement of teaching duties to permit a term, session or other period to be taken off may be considered where suitable
- Schools must determine a timetable for research leave sufficiently far in advance to enable staff to take best advantage of their period of leave
- Schools must keep a record of those who have had research leave and those who have been granted research leave for the forthcoming academic year; such records are open to inspection by all staff
- It is a requirement that progress reports are submitted to the Head of School shortly after the conclusion of the period of research leave, with a further update report required around six months thereafter. Colleges should determine the timing for submission as well as the minimum content of these reports. It is suggested that these include evidence to allow the assessment of the outcomes of the leave against the original application and could also require information about actual outputs and other measures of impact. Such reports may be considered as part of the regular process of appraisal and/or by the relevant College or University Research and Commercialisation Committees.

Equality and Diversity matters

- 8 The Colleges, in implementing the operational aspects of the research leave scheme, have the responsibility for taking into account all relevant equality and diversity considerations, but should consult with the Equality and Diversity Adviser as appropriate.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

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Document History

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Equality Impact Assessment	Available from Equality and Diversity Website http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ppg/index.php?id=111&sub=109&top=67
Modifications	