UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH LEAVE SCHEME**

The purpose of the institutional Leave Scheme is to enable staff time away from their usual duties to undertake activities that will lead to world-leading (4\*) quality in outputs, impacts or aspects of research culture and that will add significantly to our submission to the next Research Excellence Framework.

We invite applications under the following headings:

**Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding** (formerly outputs) – proposals that will ensure the completion of ongoing research reaching world leading (4\*) standard, e.g. undertaking additional work to further enhance the quality of ongoing work; completion of longer term projects to ensure publication falls within the current assessment exercise (ends 31 December 2027)

**Engagement and Impact** (formerly impact) – proposals that will support and enhance ongoing impact work with a view to producing impact case studies for REF2028 that meet world leading (4\*) standard

**People, Culture and Environment** (formerly research environment) – proposals that enhance

* Research conduct and working practices (including open science, reproducibility, research integrity, collaboration (particularly where that aligns with strategic partners such as Calgary and Curtin), interdisciplinarity etc.)
* Staff development and progression
* Research assessment and evaluation
* Equality, diversity and inclusion

To enhance our research culture and elements of research environment narratives for REF2028 that will achieve world leading (4\*) standard.

Applications are invited by 19 January 2024; selection decisions will be made by the end of February; it is anticipated that successful candidates will be notified by mid March 2024. Research leave under this round of the scheme will normally fall into the first half session of the academic year 2024/25 (however, if necessary, applications can be made for the second half session of the 24/25 academic year). Awards will be up to £20k for teaching or other buy out and reasonable expenses. Awards are payable to the School.

All candidates will require support from their Head of School or Professional Services Directorate and, where appropriate, will need to comply with any additional School requirements around approval.

This Research Leave Scheme is governed by the institutional [Research Leave Policy](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-research-and-knowledge-exchange/Research_Leave_Policy.pdf).

**Who can apply?**

The scheme is open to all staff who either undertake or enable or support research.

**What can staff apply for?**

The awards can include (to a maximum of £20k)

* Cost of replacement teaching for up to a semester (costed at teaching fellow)
* Cost of replacement administrative duties for a semester
* Networking/travel/access costs associated with proposed activities

Applications should be submitted fully costed – please consult with Research Finance.

**Selection panels**

Applications will be invited twice a year, and selection panels will meet thereafter to consider applications and make selections. Applicants can request feedback on their applications; however, appeals can only be made on the grounds of process.

Selection panels will be chaired by the Vice-Principal (Research) and draw on a pool of panelists that includes the Research Deans, Interdisciplinary Directors, School Directors of Research (disciplinary expertise will be co-opted as required), Commercialisation Manager and REF Manager. Each panel will consist of at least 3 panelists. Administrative support will be provided by the Directorate of Research & Innovation.

The decision of the panel is final. The panel reserves the right not to award leave if, in their view, applications fail to achieve the scheme’s objectives or the scheme is over-subscribed.

**What information will the selection panel require?**

The application should set out how the proposed activities during the research leave period enable the researchers to complete or enhance research **to** [**world leading**](https://www.ref.ac.uk/guidance-on-results/guidance-on-ref-2021-results/#2021) **level (i.e. 4\*) for REF2028.**

This could include work at all stages of the research life cycle or supporting impact or a positive research culture, and contributing to either of the three elements of assessment but its primary focus is on activities that will deliver 4\* outputs or 4\* impact case studies or elements of a 4\* research environment for REF2028.

The application should set out clearly how leave at this point will deliver or enhance/accelerate the completion of one or more 4\* research outputs; one or more 4\* impact case studies; or aspects of our research culture or environment within the timetable for the next REF.

Any previous external or internal funding, and further funding that may be required should be clearly listed, even if the proposed spend does not fall under allowable costs within this scheme. **Applicants may ask for funding for leave of up to a maximum six months.** Any leave granted under this scheme may be supplemented by externally funded leave, or research leave granted under a School scheme.

Applicants are required to report any outcomes of the leave, within one month of completion and further reporting beyond that date.

**What are the selection criteria?**

Selection panels will consider:

* whether the proposed activity or activities are capable of achieving world leading (4\*) quality in terms of originality, significance and rigour (for research outputs) or in terms of reach and significance (for impacts) or vitality and sustainability (for research environment)
* whether there is a clearly articulated and achievable plan that will enhance our institutional REF submissions
* Whether the timeframe for delivery is realistic and achievable for REF2028

**Equality & Diversity**

We will be undertaking equality impact assessments to monitor the representation of researchers with characteristics protected by the Equalities Act 2010, full time/part time status and career stage among applicants and awardees. While the selection criteria will apply equally to all applications, **we particularly invite applications from underrepresented groups, those with protected characteristics and/or at early career stages .**

In considering applications, allowance will be made for researchers/colleagues who have taken a career break or family related leave or are returning from long absence.

**Further information**

Further information is available from [impact@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:impact@abdn.ac.uk)

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