

## Sabbatical and Study Leave Scheme

### Document Control

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This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure compliance with changes in employment law and equality and diversity legislation. In the event that this policy or procedure is not compliant, the relevant legislation shall prevail.

**Changes to this policy will be subject to consultation with the University's recognised Trade Unions before implementation**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The objective of the Sabbatical Leave Scheme is to enable both academic and professional staff to apply for a period of leave to concentrate on a programme of work that will lead to identifiable and measurable outcomes that relate to at least one of the University's KPIs. The duration of the sabbatical leave will be one determined by the nature of the project that a member of staff wishes to complete. The maximum period applied for should not exceed six months in total (including summer vacation) with the exception of fellowship sabbatical where external funding is available to cover salary costs.
- 1.2 It is not an entitlement of a contractual right to take such leave but the University agrees to consider such requests.
- 1.3 Three types of Sabbatical Leave can be applied for:
  - a) Sabbatical Leave – Research
  - b) Sabbatical Leave – Education
  - c) Sabbatical Leave – Professional
- 1.4 The decision to agree the request to apply for Sabbatical Leave by academics will be made by the Dean of College. Decisions will be made by evaluating the employee's personal needs and development with the needs of the Department/College and are likely to take into consideration the following:
  - a) ability to reorganise work amongst existing employees;
  - b) ability to cover any additional costs to the Department/College;
  - c) ability to maintain the student experience;
  - d) impact on quality and performance of the Department.
- 1.5 The decision to agree the request to apply for Sabbatical Leave by professional employees will normally be made by the appropriate Director of College Operations or Head of Directorate. Decisions will be made by evaluating the employee's personal needs and development with the needs of the Directorate/University. The ability to reorganise the work amongst existing staff and the potential impact on the student experience are likely to be taken into consideration.
- 1.6 Applications for leave that do not meet the criteria detailed below and are of less than one month duration do not constitute Sabbatical Leave and should be submitted in writing directly to the Head of Department/DCO/Directorate and Dean of College where appropriate.

## 2. SABBATICAL LEAVE - RESEARCH

- 2.1 Sabbatical Leave - Research should be used for work which cannot be managed within the normal organisation of duties. Successful applicants will be expected to continue with essential duties such as PhD supervision and to be in regular contact with their Department and line manager.

### 2.2 Criteria

- 2.2.1 Applications will be considered against the following **strategic** criteria:

- a) the period of leave must be designed to deliver identified research outputs. Highest priority will be given to outputs in peer-reviewed journals, substantial research grant applications and research monographs;
- b) applications to visit another laboratory to learn a research method to import to Brunel, to visit a specific library or achieve, to conduct field work including but not limited to performances and surveys, or to carry out a specific piece of research that cannot be conducted in the researcher's own laboratory are also allowed;
- c) the research programme and outputs must fit with the University's research plans and priorities and the Vice-Dean Research/College Research Centre Director/Institute Director's comments on this aspect of the proposal will be given substantial weight in determining the outcome of the application;
- d) the programme for leave must demonstrate how it will further the applicant's research development.

2.2.2 Applications will also be considered against the following **operational** criteria:

- a) Sabbatical Leave will not be granted to employees who are still within their probationary period although study leave for appropriate training and development may be taken;
- b) Sabbatical Leave will not usually be granted to employees who have had a research sabbatical in the last five years, nor will it normally be provided to allow employees to write up a doctoral thesis;
- c) if an applicant has already benefited from a period of Sabbatical Leave, consideration will be given as to how recently s/he received leave and the outcomes;
- d) all successful applications must have the support of the Head of Department;
- e) where possible, academic employees should time their application to coincide with the lightest teaching commitments e.g. the summer term.

### 2.3 Assessment

Selection of successful applicants will be undertaken by a panel of representatives from Colleges on behalf of the College Management Board. Decisions will be approved by the College Management Board and referred back to the Planning Department who will issue letters and monitor reporting.

Applicants granted Research Leave must submit satisfactory final reports outlining achievements against the programme milestones. CMBs will submit reports bi-annually to the Academic Strategy Committee.

### 2.4 Application Process

Applications can be submitted at any time and should be made through the central Planning Portal to ensure that all outcomes are recorded and can be reported on for institutional analysis and assessment.

Applications will be directed to the Vice Dean (Research) before being considered by the College panel.

### **3. SABBATICAL LEAVE – EDUCATION**

3.1 Sabbatical Leave – Education may be granted for work that will enhance student learning provided this results in identifiable and measurable outcomes that relate directly to University KPIs. Sabbatical leave should be used for work that cannot be managed within the normal organisation of duties in the College. Successful applicants will be expected to continue with essential duties such as PhD supervision and to be in regular contact with their Department and line manager. Where possible academic employees should time their application to coincide with the lightest teaching commitments e.g. the summer term.

#### **3.2 Criteria**

3.2.1 Applications will be considered against the following **strategic** criteria:

- a) the period of leave must be designed to deliver identified outputs, which may include research outputs such as publications, but may also include recommendations of good practice or delivery of new teaching methodologies and/or innovations. Highest priority will be given to outputs providing cross University benefits;
- b) the programme and outputs should fit with the College education plans and priorities. The Vice-Dean Education's comments on this aspect of the proposal will be given substantial weight in determining the outcome of the application;
- c) the programme for leave must demonstrate how it will further the applicant's teaching development and delivery and benefit the student experience;

3.2.2 Applications will also be considered against the following **operational** criteria:

- a) Sabbatical Leave will not be granted to employees who are still within their probationary period although study leave for appropriate training and development may be taken;
- b) Sabbatical Leave will not normally be provided to allow employees to write up a doctoral thesis;
- c) if an applicant has already benefited from a period of Sabbatical Leave, consideration will be given as to how recently s/he received leave and the outcomes;
- d) all successful applications must have the support of the Head of Department.

#### **3.3 Assessment**

Selection of successful applicants will be undertaken by a panel of representatives from Colleges on behalf of the College Management Board. Decisions will be approved by the College Management Board and referred back to the Planning Department who will issue letters and monitor reporting.

Applicants granted Education Leave must submit satisfactory final reports outlining achievements against the programme milestones. CMBs will submit reports bi-annually to the Academic Strategy Committee.

### **3.4 Application Process**

Applications can be submitted at any time and should be made through the central Planning Portal to ensure that all outcomes are recorded and can be reported on for institutional analysis and assessment.

Applications will be directed to the Vice Dean (Education) before being considered by the College panel.

## **4. SABBATICAL LEAVE – PROFESSIONAL**

4.1 The objective of Professional Leave is to enable employees to pursue a professional or personal development goal. Leave periods granted may include secondments or charitable work and should be of benefit to both the individual and the University. Applications for periods of unpaid leave to pursue extended work in the charitable or voluntary sector do not need to come through the Sabbatical Leave route but should be submitted in writing to the Director of College Operations/Head of Directorate.

### **4.2 Criteria**

The following criteria will apply:

- a) the period of leave must be designed to deliver identified benefit to both the individual and the College/Directorate/University;
- b) Professional Leave will not be granted to employees who are still within their probationary period although study leave for appropriate training and development may be taken;
- c) all successful applications must have the support of the Director of College Operations/Head of Directorate;
- d) where possible employees should time their application to coincide with the lightest work commitments.

### **4.3 Assessment**

Selection of successful applicants will be undertaken by a panel of representatives from the Professional Services on behalf of the Human Resources Committee, chaired by the Director of Human Resources or a nominated representative. Applications from College based Professional Services will be decided by the College Management Board. Applicants granted Sabbatical Leave must submit satisfactory final reports outlining achievements against the programme milestones. These will be reviewed and reported on by the Director of Human Resources.

#### **4.4 Application Process**

Applications can be submitted at any time and should be made through the central Planning Portal to ensure that all outcomes are recorded and can be reported on for institutional analysis and assessment.

The application form will be directed to the Director of Human Resources before being considered by the Head of Directorate or DCO for their assessment, comment and approval.

Decisions will be approved by Head of Directorate or DCO and referred back to the Planning Department who will issue letters and monitor reporting.

### **5. STRATEGIC UNIVERSITY OVERSIGHT**

The strategic direction of the University sabbatical schemes will be overseen, evaluated and monitored by the relevant University committees. CMBs will be required to report to the Academic Strategy Committee and the Human Resources Committee accounting for the sabbaticals awarded and providing evidence of their linkage to the achievement of University KPIs. Directorates will be required to report to the Human Resources Committee accounting for the sabbaticals that have been awarded and providing evidence of their linkage to the achievement of University KPIs. These reports will be submitted bi-annually.

Oversight of the sabbatical schemes for reporting and evaluation purposes would be as follows:

- Provost as Chair of the Academic Strategy Committee for Research Leave,
- Provost as Chair of the Academic Strategy Committee for Education Leave
- Director of Human Resources for Professional Leave.

An annual report on Sabbatical Leave uptake and outcomes will be submitted to the Executive Board by the Chair of the Human Resources committee.

### **6. STUDY LEAVE**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Brunel recognises the benefits of development for employees and the University and provides a wide range of opportunities for staff to undertake personal and professional development as part of the PDR process.

Study leave may be required when employees wish to undertake study that relates to their role and requires a sustained period of time out of the workplace, i.e. a degree or professional course or a course that enhances career prospects but is not an essential requirement for the role. Requests to attend short conferences or seminars, whether internal or external, essential training for the role or any training arranged by the Organisational Development Team in Human Resources should be discussed with the line manager but the study leave form is not required for this.

The University has a responsibility to maintain services in order to meet business needs and there is no automatic right to time off for study or training. However, line managers are encouraged to try and accommodate an employee's study leave needs where possible.

## **6.2 Scope**

The Study Leave Scheme applies to all staff employed at the University with at least 26 weeks continuous service, including employees who are still within their probationary period. Individual circumstances will apply to staff on probation and casual and hourly paid employees.

Employees with special needs such as language difficulties or disabilities that may prevent them from full participation in this scheme will be provided with reasonable adjustment and appropriate assistance.

## **6.3 Statutory Entitlement**

Employees with at least 26 weeks continuous service have a statutory right to request unpaid time off for study or training; this is described as 'time to train'. Requests made under the 'time to train' right must be supported by evidence showing how the study or training will improve:

- a) the employee's effectiveness at work and
- b) the performance of the business of the University.

The University is only obliged to consider one formal request for time off for study or training in any twelve month period. Informal requests do not count towards this quota.

## **6.4 Additional Brunel University London Entitlement**

For employees with at least 52 weeks continuous service, the University offers up to ten days paid time off for study or training per year. Part time and fixed term employees will in general be entitled to paid study leave pro rata to the hours they work.

Employees may request longer periods of paid/unpaid time off for study or training, where the course they propose to undertake merits it. Additional paid/unpaid leave may be granted at the discretion of the Dean/Director.

Any study leave granted, whether paid or unpaid, is subject to the operational requirements of the University. The Human Resources Directorate must be notified where study leave has been agreed for the necessary administrative and recording procedures to be completed.

## **6.5 Payment of Training**

Some courses may be considered business critical, boost the capability of the team and be essential for the effective running of the department. If an employee undertakes a course at the request of the University, subject to the availability of departmental budgets, the department may fund part or the entire course.

The University is not obliged to meet the costs of study, training or membership fees. However, the University will consider this, where requested. A number of factors will



be taken into account such as the duration of the training, relevant to current role and return on investment.

If an employee leaves within 12 months of completing a course funded by the University then they will be expected to refund 50% of the training course costs.

If an employee wishes to study a course that is not related to their role, the additional Brunel entitlement would not normally apply. The flexible working policy may be consulted in this instance.

## **6.6 Informal Requests for Study or Training**

The University anticipates that many routine training requests can be considered informally, without having to use the formal procedure e.g. where a member of staff wishes to attend a short external conference, seminar, workshop or training courses run by the Organisational Development Team in Human Resources and their line manager agrees. The ten days paid time off would not normally apply in these circumstances and the study leave form does not need to be completed. However, internal courses attended will be recorded training.

## **6.7 Formal Requests for Training**

The formal procedure for requesting time off for study leave should be used where:

- a) the duration of the study leave is likely to be lengthy and the employee wants to request a regular or sustained period of time off for training or study e.g. to undertake a part time degree or professional qualification;
- b) an employee wishes to change their terms and conditions of employment for the duration of the course by requesting a flexible working arrangement to undertake study or training e.g. to reduce their hours to undertake a day release course;
- c) an employee and their line manager have discussed a request for time off for study or training informally and are unable to reach agreement.

If an employee wishes to reduce their working hours a REAP will also need to be completed.

## **6.8 Requesting Time off For Study Leave or Training**

The majority of study leave and training requests should be agreed as part of the employee's PDR discussions. The number of days paid leave agreed should take account of the guidelines section 6.4 above. The study leave form should be completed for all requests that require a sustained period of time out of the workplace for study or training.

In addition, employees can request time off for study or training where they can reasonably demonstrate that it is likely to lead to an improvement in the performance of the Department/College/University. Requests can be made either in relation to an accredited programme leading to the award of a recognised qualification or in relation to unaccredited training that will help the employee to develop specific skills relevant to their role. The Study Leave Form should normally be submitted at least 12 weeks in advance of the course start date.

After carefully considering the request, and where the line manager is happy to support the request, they should complete the study leave form and forward it to the Dean/Director or nominated representative for final agreement.

If the request is not clear or the manager has any concerns about granting the request, they should arrange to meet with the employee to discuss further. The meeting should take place no later than 28 days after the date on which the request was submitted.

During the meeting, the employee should be prepared to discuss all aspects of their request including how the study or training will:

- a) improve their effectiveness;
- b) improve the performance of the Department/College/University;
- c) be delivered;
- d) be paid for.

The line manager may suggest some different study or training options or different ways in which to meet the training need. This may include discussions around how the study or training will be accommodated and financed. The employee should be willing to consider these suggestions.

#### **6.9 Reasons for Declining a Request for Study Leave**

In line with legislation, a line manager may reject a request for time off for study or training for one or more of the following reasons:

- a) the study or training is unlikely to improve the employee's effectiveness;
- b) the study or training is unlikely to improve the Department/College/University effectiveness;
- c) it would cause a detrimental effect on the ability of the Department/College to fulfil its function;
- d) the employee's work cannot be reorganised among existing employees;
- e) additional employees cannot be recruited to cover the absence;
- f) it would cause a detrimental impact on the University's performance and/or quality;
- g) there is insufficient work during the periods when the employee proposes to work;
- h) it conflicts with planned structural changes.

The reasons for declining a request for study leave must be outlined in writing to the employee, with clear explanations of why the request cannot be accommodate under one of more of the reasons outlined above. A decision will be given to the employee within 14 days of the meeting.

The final decision on whether study leave will be granted rests with the Vice-Provost and Dean/Director or their nominated representative and is subject to operational requirements.

#### **6.10 Guidelines on Amount of Paid Study Leave**

The University recognises that circumstances and types of study vary. Therefore, rather than being prescriptive on the exact amount of leave available, each case should be assessed individually with consideration to grant up to ten paid days and the following factors taken into consideration:

- a) how far the course of study is work related;
- b) identified as a development requirement in the employee's PDR;
- c) intended to improve the employee's effectiveness or the performance of the department;
- d) aspirational e.g. likely to benefit the employee in their personal career development;
- e) purely for personal interest;
- f) the level of qualification;
- g) a reasonable level of confidence that the employee will complete/pass the training;
- h) what impact the study leave will have on the department and team.

### **6.11 Right of Appeal**

Employees who have been refused study leave have a statutory right to appeal. The appeal should be raised in the first instance with their line manager. The line manager should then inform the Associate Director of HR – Organisational Development.

Any complaints related to study leave will be recorded by the Human Resources Directorate. They will be monitored with the aim of bringing consistency between Colleges and Directorates in the way that policies relating to work life balance are implemented across the University.

Appeal hearings, where it is possible, will be chaired by a manager who is at a higher grade than the manager who decided on the original request. He/she will be supported by a member of the Human Resources Directorate who has not previously been involved in the matter previously. The panel, where possible, should reflect a varied profile in terms of ethnicity and gender. The Employee will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work place colleagues.

The appeal will take into account any new evidence that the employee or line manager may present and considers relevant to the study leave request. The procedure for the hearing is in appendix A.

## **Appendix A- The Study Leave Appeal Hearing Procedure**

An employee has the right to appeal against the University's decision to decline their request for time off for study or training, in full or in part, which could include any of the following grounds:

- failure to follow the Study Leave Policy;
- new information;
- relevant information which was not taken into account

A letter stating the grounds of the appeal must be submitted, in writing, to the relevant Senior HR Business Partner, within 14 calendar days of the date of the written confirmation of the decision.

Appeal hearings will be held within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal letter.

Appeal hearings will be chaired by a manager who is at a higher grade than the manager who made the decision to which the appeal refers. The chair will be supported by a member of Human Resources who has not been involved in the matter previously.

If required and/or appropriate, a line manager may be accompanied to an appeal hearing by the relevant member of Human Resources who was involved in the case prior to appeal.

At the appeal hearing, the member of staff may be accompanied by a work colleague or Trade Union representative. Where the staff companion is unavailable to attend a meeting, the employee must propose a meeting not more than 7 days later.

The outcome of the appeal hearing will be confirmed by the chair, in writing, within 14 calendar days of the appeal hearing.

The decision made by the chair of the appeal hearing is final. There is no further right of appeal.