



Sabbatical Scheme

Procedure Owner	Vice Principal - Research & Regional Engagement	Procedure Author	Vice Principal - Research & Regional Engagement
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2	Revision of existing Scheme	April 2026

Sabbatical Leave Scheme and Procedures

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This scheme defines sabbatical leave; the parameters within which staff may access this leave; and explains the process to be followed when applying for sabbatical leave.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The scheme applies to academic staff. Entitlement to sabbatical leave is not automatic but is based on the merits of an application proposal and how the proposal fits with the strategic needs of the School or Department and the University, at the time the application is made.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 Definitions for the purposes of the scheme

- 3.1.1 Sabbatical leave is a period of absence from regular duties to allow a member of staff to further their research and/or innovation activities. It is expected that the sabbatical will bring significant tangible benefits to the individual and to RGU through higher quality research outputs, substantial increases in external funding, income generation or other quantifiable measures;

- 3.1.2 The University recognises that research and innovation can take a variety of forms according to the academic discipline. Outputs might include, but are not limited to books, articles, monographs, as well as patents and licenses; and categories may also include:

- 3.1.2.1 Entrepreneurial activities involved in knowledge or technology transfer and

research impact.

3.1.2.2 Development or creation of an innovative platform, product, tool.

3.1.2.3 Action research, client-focused research and practice-based research.

3.1.2.4 Income generation for research.

3.1.2.5 Working with external agencies in research-user networks.

4. General Parameters

- 4.1 A member of staff considering an application for sabbatical leave is expected to have had an initial discussion with their line manager as part of their MY VOICE to explore and discuss the activity that would be undertaken, output(s) and benefits for the School/Department and University.
- 4.2 Sabbatical leave is not an entitlement; applications require approval from the Dean of School/Department Lead and the Vice-Principal (Research and Regional Engagement) with endorsement from the People and Culture Manager and a Finance Business Partner.
- 4.3 The actual period of sabbatical leave agreed will depend on the needs and strengths of the application submitted, its purpose and value.
- 4.4 Sabbatical leave can be either fully or partially paid by the University. In all cases staff are required to clearly articulate the level and source of any required funding, as part of the application process.
- 4.5 If staff want a period of unpaid leave from the University they must submit an application via the University's flexible working scheme.
- 4.6 Sabbatical Leave is a form of leave which is normally free from all core duties such as teaching, marking, attending committees, and administration; with the exception

of some duties which would have a significant impact on the School/Department if not continued throughout the period of sabbatical leave, such as Post Graduate Research supervision or other external commitments linked to an individual's expertise upon agreement.

- 4.7 To apply for sabbatical leave a member of staff must have successfully completed their probationary period (if applicable). Where probation has been extended solely due to protected leave or related absence, this will not prevent an application being considered.
- 4.8 Staff on sabbatical leave are expected to maintain regular engagement with their line manager (and appointed mentor if applicable) throughout the period of sabbatical leave, providing updates on progress and addressing any issues as required.
- 4.9 Maximum entitlement to sabbatical leave will normally be one or two semesters per 8 years of service (probationary service counts towards the number of years). However, applications demonstrating exceptional circumstances or significant strategic value may still be considered outside these normal parameters.
- 4.10 Early career researchers can still be granted leave on merit, and the service requirement may be pro-rated or flexed in justified circumstances.
- 4.11 Accommodating adjustments to timelines and expectations will be made where a staff member has experienced long-term sickness, family leave such as maternity leave, or any pregnancy related absence.

5. Application process

- 5.1 An application for sabbatical leave must be made using the Sabbatical Application form, which will detail any specific funding and costing arrangements.
- 5.2 The application must contain a set of measurable objectives and targets, as well as a plan of work with clear milestones. These should be based on a discussion the applicant should

arrange with the Dean/Department Lead and Associate Dean for Research if applicable.

- 5.3 The application must be submitted on or before January of the current academic year, for proposed commencement in the next academic year, in order for the application to be considered as part of the work force planning cycle; late applications will not normally be considered.
- 5.4 Where a staff member requires flexibility due to substantial caring responsibilities, the need for reasonable adjustments, a period of long-term sickness leave, family leave, pregnancy, or pregnancy related illness, appropriate flexibility will be applied.
Applications submitted outside the standard window will be accepted and considered in these circumstances.
- 5.5 In considering the application, the Dean/Department Lead will consider how well the proposed sabbatical leave aligns with the strategies and commitments of the School/Department and University.
- 5.6 In considering an application the Dean/Department Lead should consider and discuss any contractual terms, direct implications and any resource implications with the People and Culture and Finance Departments, including any backfill requirements to cover the absence, before forwarding the application to the Vice-Principal (Research and Regional Engagement) for further consideration.
- 5.7 The application and endorsement by the Dean/Department Lead should then be sent to the Vice-Principal (Research and Regional Engagement) for consideration/approval. Depending on the funding source, this may require further approval by an RGU Sabbatical Panel.
- 5.8 The decision of the Vice-Principal (Research and Regional Engagement) or RGU Sabbatical Panel will be final and there is no right of appeal. If staff are unhappy with any final decision made they can speak to their line manager or a member of their HR Adviser/ HR Business Partner.

- 5.9 All decisions to approve or reject sabbatical applications will be reported to the University Research Committee.
- 5.10 Copies of all application-related paperwork, whether approved or declined, should be sent to the People and Culture Department to ensure any terms are confirmed in writing.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 6.1 During the period of sabbatical leave, the individual will be required to provide regular updates on progress to the Dean of School and Associate Dean for Research to discuss their plan of work. Regular monthly meetings should be arranged, with flexibility to increase or reduce the frequency depending on the stage of the project and the support needs of the individual. A record of the issues covered, and any actions/outcomes will be agreed and retain for monitoring purposes.
- 6.2 Prior to the return from a period of sabbatical leave, a report must be submitted to the Dean/Department and the Vice-Principal (Research and Regional Engagement), setting out what has been achieved and how the objectives and targets agreed prior to the sabbatical have been met. This will help support and aid discussions as part of the MY VOICE appraisal.
- 6.3 A follow-up report may also be required, which should report on the resultant impact and results of the activities undertaken.
- 6.4 Continuation of sabbatical leave is conditional upon satisfactory progress toward the agreed aims and objectives; failure to demonstrate progress may result in the sabbatical leave ending early and a requirement to return to work.
- 6.5 Where a staff member experiences a long-term period of sickness, becomes pregnant or takes family leave during or immediately following the sabbatical period, reporting expectations and timelines will be adjusted appropriately.

7. Terms of the sabbatical leave

- 7.1 Staff who meet the qualifying conditions may apply for up to one or two semesters of sabbatical leave. Targeted, shorter periods of leave intended to support the completion of specific research outputs—such as journal articles, book chapters, grant applications or other defined deliverables—may be considered under this Sabbatical Scheme where the proposed activity demonstrates clear value and meets the criteria outlined above. However, very short periods of leave, normally one month or less, should be managed locally as part of normal workload planning and allocation throughout the academic year, rather than through the formal sabbatical application process.
- 7.2 During the period of sabbatical leave, the individual remains an employee of the University on the normal terms and conditions of employment; and all University policies apply.
- 7.3 The working location during the sabbatical leave will be agreed as part of the application.
- 7.4 Any annual leave accrued during the period of sabbatical leave is considered part of the sabbatical leave.
- 7.5 During the period of sabbatical leave, staff are not permitted to take up any additional employment, or to provide any consultancy services to any third party unless this is part of an on-going agreement previously disclosed to and agreed by the University.
- 7.6 The period of sabbatical leave will count (pro rata) as continuous and reckonable service for all relevant purposes.
- 7.7 All other terms and conditions of employment will continue.
- 7.8 The University is committed to ensuring that access to sabbatical leave is fair, transparent and free from discrimination. The policy will be applied consistently, and reasonable accommodations will be made where required to ensure equitable access to sabbatical opportunities for all staff.

8. **Review**

8.1 This scheme will be reviewed every three years or as required.