

STUDY AND RESEARCH LEAVE

Policy and Guidance

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1. POLICY

1.1 Introduction

This policy provides a framework for academic discussions taken across all faculties in their approach to managing appropriately balanced workloads across teaching, management, research, and other academic activities in line with the Terms and Conditions of Service for Academic Staff and Research Staff. This policy does not apply to Associate Lecturers.

The use of the term 'leave' in this context does not necessarily imply absence from the normal base of activities for a period of time, rather a mode of operation away from teaching and management duties.

As part of Academic Terms and Conditions, time is identified to ensure academic staff have the opportunity to pursue appropriate research and scholarship activity. This time also enables knowledge exchange, development in their discipline, and other approved academic purposes comparable to those available to members of academic staff in other universities during the long vacation or academic sabbaticals.

1.2 Entitlements

Study leave and research time/leave runs from 1st August to 31st July. All entitlements are calculated pro rata for part-time colleagues and apply to both permanent and fixed-term members of staff. The entitlements vary across the different categories of academic and research staff as follows:

Staff category	Study leave	Research time/leave
Central Academic Staff	44 days study leave per year	35 days research time (equating to 20 percent of their time)
National/Regional Academic Staff (referred to as Staff Tutors/ Student Experience Managers)	22 days study leave per year (44 days within each period of two years completed service)	22 days research leave per year
Research Staff		dependent upon role and funding arrangements*
Research Assistants		44 days for research towards a higher degree or other approved academic purpose (the equivalent of one full working day a week)*

*Externally funded Research Assistants, Research Associates and other Researchers, who are 100% externally funded, may not be entitled to study time, due to funder regulations.

Although Nation Directors are not entitled to study leave, sympathetic consideration will be given by the Council of the University to an application for leave of absence on full pay for approved purposes, such as to maintain the member's academic discipline or to promote their educational services to the University. Please refer to the Academic Terms and Conditions for further details.

1.3 Taking study leave and research time/leave

There is a clear expectation that study leave is taken in the year it is accrued to ensure each member of academic staff has a mix of activity to support their career development whilst delivering the business priorities within the Faculty.

However, it is recognised there may be occasional periods of time where this is not possible, or the research or scholarship plans of an individual require a different pattern of activity.

In these exceptional circumstances, the bring forward, or carry over, of agreed time/leave needs to be discussed and agreed with the line manager and recorded in the Academic Workload Management (AWM) system with the rationale recorded in the 'notes' facility. As with all workload plans, there should be clear expectations, with a plan and objectives agreed for the appropriate use of the time.

It is important to manage and plan for any extended study leave requests appropriately, as these will be an unusual arrangement. All requests for extended study leave are to be made in writing and include an indication as to how it aligns with CDSA or other objectives.

If a planned period of dedicated study leave time exceeds six months, this must be discussed and agreed in advance by a more senior manager, normally the Executive Dean of the Faculty (or nominee).

In exceptional circumstances, it may be possible to accrue study leave, with the advance approval of the Executive Dean (or nominee). Where study leave accrual has been agreed, please refer to the Terms and Conditions of Service for details of maximum allowances.

1.4 Temporary appointments and internal transfers

As per the Academic Terms and Conditions of Service, temporary colleagues are entitled to accrue study leave (to be taken within the period of the contract) on the same terms as an equivalent member of the permanent staff.

Where academic staff have been on a fixed term contract of less than two years and previously did not accrue study leave, the entitlement will apply retrospectively from 1st August 2019 to 31st July 2022. Staff are required to take this leave within a four

year period from when the leave is granted. After the four year period, any untaken leave is lost. This will apply to the transition period only.

Where the appointee is moving from a category of staff where there is no entitlement to study leave, such as academic-related to academic, previous service in that category will not count towards calculating study leave entitlement.

1.5 Academic staff leaving the OU

When a member of academic staff is leaving the University, any study leave has to be taken in advance of the leaving date. Any study leave not taken by the leaving date will be forfeited and no equivalent monetary payment may be made in lieu of study leave. Similarly, where research time/leave has been agreed, this is forfeited (with no monetary equivalent) if it has not been completed by the contract end date.

Where a member of academic staff is retiring, any study leave should be planned to be taken in the year prior to the date of retirement to ensure the best benefit of the use of this time for the individual and the University.

Members of staff on fixed term contracts must take all their study leave prior to the expiry date of their contract unless there are additional funds available to extend the contract for a further period. Colleagues should be given the time to take all of their study leave prior to the expiry date of their contract.

A researcher with entitlement to study leave who resigns, may take any outstanding study time as terminal leave, subject to the Executive Dean's advance approval, and prior to the actual date of termination.

1.6 Academic staff on maternity/adoption/shared parental leave

Where an individual is about to take or is returning from a period of maternity/adoption/shared parental leave, the approach taken to study leave and research time/leave must be identical to that of all other staff.

Line managers should engage with academic members of staff on a proactive basis prior to the period of absence, to ensure the impact on an individual is explored, and mitigating actions are in place for the continuation of activity prior to the absence, including possible study or research leave.

Academic staff returning from maternity/adoption/shared parental leave need to have an appropriate plan for re-establishing the full range of academic duties. This plan may cover a period longer than a single year, and may include additional time to support appropriate activities particularly for developing research outputs.

Line managers need to discuss the career aspirations and expectations with the returner to ensure an appropriate range of activities and time is agreed and recorded in the Academic Workload Management (AWM) system.

1.7 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff, regardless of age, care experience, caring status or dependency, civil status, disability, family status, gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or trades union membership status.

1.8 Policy review

The University is committed to reviewing this policy to ensure it remains fit for purpose. This policy will be reviewed every three years.

1.9 Useful references

Study and Research Leave Guidance
Terms and Conditions Academic Staff
Terms and Conditions Full Time Research Staff
Adoption Leave and Pay Policy
Maternity Leave and Pay Policy
Shared Parental Leave and Pay Policy

2. GUIDANCE

2.1 Introduction

This guidance aims to assist line managers in implementing the Study and Research Leave Policy for Academic and Research staff, and their discussions on managing appropriately balanced workloads across teaching, management, research, and other academic activities, in line with the Terms and Conditions of Service for Academic Staff and Research Staff.

2.2 Approach

Study leave is a mode of operation where members of academic staff are focused on agreed research, scholarship or other academic activities. This may be dispersed across working time or may require some dedicated, contiguous, uninterrupted time to be allocated.

Where a period of uninterrupted time is agreed, an assessment of deadlines and priorities associated with other activities, in particular teaching commitments, within the dedicated study leave time needs to be made. This will enable a clear plan and delegation of authority (where appropriate) to ensure other business requirements are not unnecessarily disrupted.

The use of study leave time is a shared responsibility, with the line manager providing support and solutions, and the individual academic taking responsibility for the entirety of the commitments within their workload.

As part of the annual CDSA or other regular reviews, and workload planning exercises, this time needs to be planned and agreed with the line manager, with a shared responsibility to identify and agree all the key business priorities, and put in place appropriate arrangements to ensure these priorities are met.

It is important that line managers support individuals by developing good plans for utilising this time, and provide other support, such as mentoring. In addition, there needs to be discussions around promotion considerations with their staff member, as part of CDSA or other regular reviews.

A review of the outcomes of the study leave that has been taken also forms part of the individual's CDSA or other regular reviews. These discussions and plans should be recorded.

2.3 Managing study leave and research time/leave

The annual crediting of study leave and research time/leave and the debiting of this time/leave as it is taken is to be recorded in the Academic Workload Management (AWM) system with the rationale recorded in the 'notes' facility. As with all workload plans, there should be clear expectations, with a plan and objectives agreed for the appropriate use of the time.

Accurate records of study and research time/leave should be maintained, with study leave and research time/leave broadly taken in the year in which it is accrued. In exceptional agreed circumstances, the bring forward and carry forward of time can be discussed and agreed in line with the Study and Research Leave Policy and Terms and Conditions of Service.

All decisions concerning study leave or research time/leave should be clearly recorded in the Academic Workload Management (AWM) system.

2.4 Academic staff joining and leaving the OU

Study leave entitlement for new members of staff during their first year is calculated on a pro rata basis from the date of appointment to the following 31st July. On termination of employment, the study leave record is to be adjusted and calculated up to the actual date of termination.

2.5 Remuneration from other sources

If a member of staff on study leave or research time/leave receives remuneration from another source outside of the University during this time, the entitlement to full salary will be reviewed at the discretion of the Council.