Human Resources

EMPLOYEE AND MANAGER GUIDANCE ON EXTENDED UNPAID LEAVE REQUESTS (OVER 4 WEEKS, MAXIMUM 12 MONTHS)

We recognise that some employees may wish to take extended time away from work for personal reasons. This may be to undertake study, to provide longer term care for an ill dependant, to go on the holiday of a lifetime or to pursue other family or charitable interests.

This guidance explains how employees can request extended unpaid leave (and the impact on their terms and conditions), and how managers should fairly assess and manage these requests.

Eligibility and Making a Request

Please refer to the Time Off for Public Duties and Special Leave Policy and Procedure for the eligibility criteria. Unpaid leave will not be granted to undertake another paid job.

The request should be made in good time (minimum 3 months' notice) before the leave would start, using the Application Form for Extended Unpaid Time Off. A shorter notice period may be agreed where the request relates to the illness of a dependant or other urgent extenuating circumstances.

Employees should provide:

- a brief explanation of the reason for the request
- proposed dates of leave
- potential benefits to the University of the planned activities during the absence (if applicable)
- ideas for how the impact on their work and team might be managed during their absence, as clearly an extended period of absence will cause disruption to the team and School/Service.

Not all requests will be agreed and so employees must not commit themselves to any plans until they receive the outcome of their application.

Manager Consideration of Requests

Managers will arrange to meet with the employee to discuss the request. Managers will decide whether requests can be accommodated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account:

- the operational needs of the University and team (or anticipated needs) during the proposed period of absence
- any potential benefits to the University
- whether suitable arrangements can be made to cover the employee's work, including cost implications of backfill/redistribution of work and training
- sympathetic consideration where the request relates to the illness of a family member

- consistency with similar requests within the School/Service
- Dean/Director approval must be sought by the manager prior to agreeing a request for unpaid leave that exceeds 4 weeks.

Managers may authorise or decline the request, or attempt to come to a different, but mutually agreeable arrangement. Written reasons will be provided for any declined requests.

Manager Action Where Extended Unpaid Leave of Absence is Approved

Managers should forward the completed Application for Extended Unpaid Time Off form to the Dean/Director for approval and then to HRServicesteam@leedsbeckett.ac.uk, along with confirmation of the agreed dates of absence.

Effect of Unpaid Leave on Employee Terms and Conditions

Generally, contractual entitlements will be suspended for the duration of the unpaid leave. More details are given below. Employees should carefully consider the implications before making an application.

- No salary, allowances or other payments will be paid during unpaid leave.
- No eligibility for statutory or occupational sick pay during unpaid leave.
- Incremental progression will be paused (the normal increment date will be delayed by the length of the unpaid leave).
- Membership of an occupational pension scheme membership will continue, and members will continue to be covered for death in service benefits during the entire period of unpaid leave. However, occupational pension scheme service will not be accrued. Employees are encouraged to seek further advice from pensions@leedsbeckett.ac.uk regarding their individual circumstances.
- The start date of continuous service will not be affected and the period spent on unpaid leave will count towards continuous service.
- Employees remain bound by their contractual terms around confidentiality and intellectual property.
- Contractual annual leave will accrue on a pro rata basis, reflecting the period worked during the relevant leave year. Statutory annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue during unpaid leave (20 days pro rata).
- Service for occupational and statutory sick pay and maternity, adoption and shared parental leave and pay will not accrue. This may affect future eligibility and payments.
- Depending on the terms of the arrangement, Leeds Beckett loans (e.g. visa fee loan, cycle to work, travel passes) may need to be repaid in full prior to the start of the unpaid leave. Contact Payroll (payroll@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) for more information.
- Employees who hold a visa to work in the UK are encouraged to check Home Office webpages for any restrictions and/or consequences linked to their visa prior to requesting unpaid leave.

Keeping in Touch

Before leave begins, managers and employees must agree:

- Frequency of contact (normally monthly)

- Method of contact (e.g. personal email address, mobile phone)
- How key updates will be shared – employees must be contactable in case of important University, School/Service and/or employment updates
- Contact prior to return to discuss return to work (minimum 4 weeks before return date). Managers must also contact HR Services team at this time (and in accordance with payroll deadlines) to confirm the actual return date to ensure salary payment resumes.
- System access – Managers should consider if there is any IT system access which needs to be removed during the period of absence (and if so, arrange this locally).
- When annual leave will be taken:
    - the pro rata contractual annual leave entitlement must be taken prior to the absence
    - the pro rata statutory annual leave accrued whilst absent must be taken at the end of the absence (prior to return to work), or taken as part of a short term flexible working arrangement.

Should employees wish to resign during their unpaid leave of absence, then normal notice periods apply.