The UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON RESEARCH LEAVE FOR ACADEMIC STAFF

1. Introduction

1.1. The University's research strategy aims to strengthen our position as a world class, research intensive university and increase the non-academic impact of our research on the world through an enhanced portfolio of knowledge exchange activities with industry, business and society.

1.2 Our ambition to be a world-leading university will be achieved by improving the quality of our research through publications, research income and partnerships and enhancing our impact and knowledge exchange activities.

1.3 The University recognises that research leave is an important part of the professional and intellectual development of its academic staff and helps sustain the University's reputation for high calibre research and scholarship. The University encourages research leave where it will enhance the quality and range of research or knowledge transfer activities. The Policy on Research Leave for Academic Staff supports this commitment.

2. Scope

2.1 The Policy on Research Leave for Academic Staff has been developed as a framework for Schools to adopt (containing general principles to be applied across all Schools), but which will provide Schools with sufficient flexibility to devise their own local processes, appropriate for their own particular requirements.

2.2 All Schools must produce a published statement on research leave for academic staff, which is readily available to their staff. Schools will devise their own application process for research leave, ensuring that the following principles are incorporated.

2.3 Research leave may be used, for example, to visit other research centres for collaborative work, to undertake pilot studies, to establish e.g. Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) networks or stakeholder- or industry-facing networks or interdisciplinary groups and networks, to undertake overseas visits to learn new approaches or consult with rare material, to allow time for the completion of 3* or 4* rated articles or monographs (for national exercises of research excellence), or fieldwork that generates new scholarship. Research leave may also be used for activities designed to enhance and increase the impact of research. Research leave can also support the development of knowledge exchange and commercialisation activities, for example by working with industry, further developing the proof of concept, or growing a spin-out company and other impact-related activities. Research leave may also be used to initiate new areas of investigation.

3. General Principles

3.1 When producing School processes within the Research Leave policy, the following principles must be adopted.

3.2 All 'category A' staff [1] will normally be eligible to apply for a period of research leave. Whilst there is no automatic entitlement to research leave, there will be an expectation that Schools will grant research leave wherever possible and in line with staff eligibility.

3.3. Applications will be welcomed from staff at all stages in their career (including early career researchers, and staff with particular circumstances e.g. returning to work following a period of maternity leave or family-related leave, or long-term sick leave – normally for a period of absence of four months or longer, or any other exceptional circumstances which may have had

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[1] As per the REF definition = *'Category A staff are defined as academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2FTE or greater… and whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'*

a significant impact upon their ability to undertake productive research), whether in full-time or part-time employment, provided that they meet the other qualifying criteria.

3.4 Staff will also be eligible to apply for 'mini research breaks'[2], designed to support specific activities e.g. completion of a final report or research grant application, or completing a research paper in the final stages prior to submission. (SEE APPENDIX A for further details of the eligibility and applications process for 'mini research breaks').

3.5 Applications for research leave will only be accepted from probationary staff in exceptional circumstances.

3.6 Normally, the maximum period of research leave that can be applied for will be one year.

3.7 Applications for research leave should normally be submitted at least twelve months prior to the proposed start date. Applications that are submitted within this timeframe should normally receive a decision at least **three months** prior to the proposed start date.

3.8 Applications should be submitted to the School Director of Research in the first instance, who will then discuss with the School Director of Teaching & Learning, prior to consideration for final approval by the Head of School. School procedures will then dictate if any other individual/School Committee is required to consider the application e.g. the Academic Line Manager, the person responsible for Academic Workload Management.

3.9 Staff who have been appointed to more than one School will be required to obtain approval from each Head of School for their research leave.

3.10 Staff should be strongly encouraged to seek external funding to support the period of research leave. Some Schools may require applicants to have secured external funding in order to support a period of research leave.

3.11 All applications for research leave must be supported by a research plan, which includes clear objectives for the period of research leave, including the expected benefits and (where applicable) the expected outputs (recognising that not all research leave will lead directly to published outputs). The purpose of the research leave must align with the School's (and the University's) overall research strategy and available resources.

3.12 Staff will normally be required to maintain their PGR supervision duties whilst on research leave. Staff will normally be released from all other School/institutional duties e.g. teaching, committee roles, School roles, etc. Where a primary supervisor will be off campus for a sustained period (more than three months) it is expected that a supervision plan is agreed with the student and that supervision meetings would continue using, e.g. Skype or other digital tools. This will safeguard the supervision of PGR students during periods of research leave.

3.13 Within one month of the end of the research leave period, staff will be required to submit a brief, written report to their School Director of Research confirming the activities completed and the research outputs or other outcomes achieved during the research leave (SEE APPENDIX B). A copy of the report should be submitted to Research & Innovation.

4. **School Responsibilities**

4.1 When devising School processes within the Research Leave policy, Schools must abide by the general principles of this policy (see section 3 above) and are encouraged to set their own guidelines for the following.

4.2 The frequency of research leave will be determined at School level and will reflect disciplinary norms. (The general expectation is that each researcher will be eligible to apply for at least one semester of research leave out of every eight).

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[2] Acknowledgement is given to the School of Education for using their policy on Mini Research Breaks as the basis for the policy in Appendix A.

4.3   The local review processes will safeguard the supervision of PGR students during periods of research leave and will ensure that the quality of the teaching experience is maintained for UG and PGT students.

4.5   Schools should maintain a record of all applications for research leave and their outcome. Schools should also maintain a record of all staff who have had research leave and those who have been granted research leave for the forthcoming academic year and these records will be available to all staff.

5.   Equality and Diversity

5.1   The Schools, in implementing the operational aspects of the research leave policy, have a responsibility to take into account all relevant equality and diversity considerations. Schools should conduct an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on their process for approving research leave to ensure that the criteria for applying for leave does not disadvantage any groups of staff. Schools should also conduct an equality profile of the staff granted research leave. Schools should consult with the Equality and Diversity Adviser for further guidance as appropriate.

6.   Implementation and Review

6.1   This Policy seeks to ensure that all Schools operate a transparent research leave scheme with effect from November 2019 onwards.

6.2   This Policy will be reviewed by the Research Policy Committee two years from the date of implementation.

Revision History:

Version	Date	Reason for release/Status
1.0	October 2009	Published copy
2.0	November 2019	Full revision to previous policy

MINI RESEARCH BREAK POLICY

1.0   Background

The University wishes to offer the opportunity for 'category A' staff[3] to apply for **periods of mini research breaks to support specific research activities over the course of the academic year.**

Mini research breaks may enable staff to bring ongoing activities to completion, such as a paper reaching the final stages prior to submission; completion of a final report or research grant application.

Applications for mini research breaks will be scrutinised by the School Director of Research and the School Director of Teaching & Learning upon recommendation from academic line managers. The Head of School will be responsible for approving the application.

The member of staff applying for a mini research break must collaborate with the School Director of Teaching and Learning to ensure suitable arrangements for teaching and other necessary cover (e.g. administration and programme management) are in place during the research break period.

2.0   Policy Statement

2.1   A mini research break will normally only be granted to undertake a specific set of activities.

2.2   A mini research break is premised on full pay and benefits being maintained by the University.

2.3   All eligible staff are entitled to apply for a mini research break.

2.4   Normally, a mini research break will be granted for a period of two weeks. On occasion, a mini research break will be granted for a period of up to four weeks. Staff can apply for two mini research breaks of two weeks each in any academic year. Where a mini research break of four weeks is approved, only one such break will be permitted in any academic year.

2.5   Applications for mini research breaks should normally be submitted at least one month prior to the proposed start date. Applications that are submitted within this timeframe should normally receive a decision at least two weeks prior to the proposed start date.

2.6   Staff who have been appointed to more than one School will be required to obtain approval from each Head of School for their mini research break.

2.7   The award of a mini research break is subject to the following:

- The submission of an application to the School Director of Research detailing the specific outcome(s) to be delivered during the mini research break.

- Intended outcomes should be specified in terms of publications and activities that directly contribute to the School's Research Excellence Framework (REF) outputs, or to the School's research income base, or to the development of the School's broader research strategy.

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[3] As per the REF definition = *'Category A staff are defined as academic staff with a contract of employment of 0.2FTE or greater… and whose primary employment function is to undertake either 'research only' or 'teaching and research'*

- Applications for mini research breaks will be considered in light of the potential benefits to the School's research profile and whether the proposed research activities are relevant and realistic.

- Certain work commitments must continue to be fulfilled during any mini research break, for example, PhD supervision. However, it would be advisable to make suitable arrangements for such duties to be undertaken before or after the mini research break.

- Where required, the application should detail appropriate cover arrangements for the staff member's normal teaching and learning responsibilities (as noted in Section 1); any such arrangements are subject to approval by the Head of School.

2.8 The School Director of Research, in liaison with the School Director of Teaching & Learning, will consider applications for mini research breaks. A recommendation will then be made for approval by the Head of School.

2.9 Following a mini research break the staff member will submit a brief written report to the School Research Committee within one week of the completion of the break. (SEE APPENDIX B)

- The report should outline the activities completed and the research outputs or other products obtained.

- Publications, drafts of material for publication and/or reports of results of research undertaken should be included in support of the report.

2.10 As part of a systematic review of the introduction and working of the Mini Research Break policy, staff may be asked to provide feedback to the School Research Committee to contribute to evaluation of the operation of the policy.

2.11 The granting of future mini research breaks is conditional on a satisfactory evaluation by the School Research Committee of the achievements of the applicant's previous periods of research leave and mini research breaks.

Application for Mini Research Break

The Mini Research Break Scheme is applicable to 'category A' staff[4] who wish to undertake a mini research break to bring to completion **a specific research activity.**

The length of a period of a mini research break will not normally exceed four weeks.

Applications for mini research breaks should normally be submitted at least one month prior to the proposed start date. A brief report of the outcomes from the mini research break must be submitted to the School Director of Research within a week of completion of the mini research break.

All applications should be supported by the Academic Line Manager, prior to submission to the School Director of Research.

N.B. *After consideration for eligibility by the School Director of Research and School Director of Teaching & Learning, applications will be forwarded to the Head of School for final approval.*

1. Name of applicant

2. List of planned outputs
List here the activities which are planned for completion during the mini research break. Please be specific about the type of output or activity (journal publication; grant application) and the deadline for expected submissions.

3. Rationale for application
Please state here how the mini research break will make a difference to your current activity. For example, outline the strategic importance of pursuing a particular activity at this time.

4. Dates of Proposed Mini Research Break (not normally more than four weeks)

	Start date	End date
Please state the period of mini research break requested		

5. Are supervisory commitments covered? YES/NO *(please underline)*

Please specify (e.g. communication with the student and second supervisor, etc.):

6. How will teaching and assessment duties be covered?

Please specify (e.g. tutorials; marking; attending to students' queries, etc):

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7. Are administrative duties covered? YES/NO *(please underline)*

Please specify (e.g. attendance to meetings; reporting from meetings, chairing, etc):

8. Previous Research Leave
(Please provide details of other periods of research leave/mini research breaks taken within the year)

Dates:	Outputs:

Signature:	Date:

Comments from Academic Line Manager:

Signature:	Date:

Comments from School Director of Research:

Signature:	Date:

Comments from School Director of Teaching & Learning:

Signature:	Date:

9. Supporting Statement *(As Head of School please confirm that you support the application and are willing to release the applicant from all teaching and administrative duties).*	
Signature:	**Date:**
Print Name:	
Statement of Support:	

Research Leave / Mini Research Break Report

1. Name of Applicant
2. Period of Research Leave / Mini Research Break Granted
3. List of Planned Research Outputs/Other Products
List here the activities which were planned for completion during the period of research leave / mini research break.
4. Summary of Research Activity Undertaken (including Achieved Research Outputs or Other Products)
List here the activities which were completed during the period of research leave / mini research break. *(Publications, drafts of material for publication and/or reports of results of research undertaken should be included in support of the report.)*

Signature:	Date:

Completed reports should be submitted to:
- **School Director of Research** (School to insert name and email address)
- **School Business Development Officer, Research & Innovation** (School to insert name and email address)

Title	Research Leave for Staff
Author / Creator	Dawn Foster, Research Policy and Governance Officer
Owner	Research Policy Committee
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Subject / Description	Policy detailing the procedures by which academics at the University can take leave for research purposes.
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