

# **School of Media, Arts and Humanities**

## **Research and Scholarship School Funded Leave Policy**

### **1. PRINCIPLES**

MAH views periods of leave as essential to the achievement of excellence in research and scholarship across the School. Creative practice and the generation of new ideas demand immersion in scholarship, evidence, thought and collaboration; the generation of quality outputs necessitates concentrated periods of study and writing away from teaching; successful grant applications demand time and focus; intense programmes of impact activity may be incompatible with the teaching timetable.

**Accordingly, our School Funded Leave Policy is designed to:**

- Actively support the research strategies and scholarship needs of subject areas, including REF strategy and curriculum development.
- Be responsive to the needs of faculty on different tracks and at different career points.
- Support the creation of publications, practice, and scholarship outputs of the highest quality in terms of originality, significance, and rigour.
- Support work leading to external grant funding.
- Support work that engages in knowledge exchange and addresses social, economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes and impacts.
- Mitigate the impact on research/scholarship of career breaks.
- Create space for innovation, ideas, and creativity.
- Embed MAH's principles of equality and transparency.

### **2. POLICY**

- 2.1** Academic staff on permanent contracts are eligible for the provision of **one term** of School Funded Leave after **the completion of three academic cycles of service** (normally expressed as six semesters or nine terms).
- 2.2** Periods of maternity/paternity leave and sick leave will contribute to this eligibility to ensure that the School's leave policy reflects best EDI practice.
- 2.3** Externally funded leave and unpaid leave periods do not contribute to this eligibility.
- 2.4** Flexible working arrangements will also be considered, but eligibility must reflect an equivalent period of teaching/administration.
- 2.5** The three academic cycles of service are counted since the applicant's last period of School-funded leave (or since their appointment start date if they have not had School-funded leave before). Staff are not able to 'bank' or carry forward terms of service from before their last period of School Funded Leave to count towards eligibility for a future period of leave.
- 2.6** Faculty on fixed-term contracts will be deemed eligible for leave only if their contract extends beyond the usual three-year leave cycle. Faculty moving from fixed term to permanent contracts should consider their start-date for leave purposes to be when their fixed term contract began.

- 2.7** Up to a maximum of 10% of FTE staff on School-funded leave in any given term can be supported across MAH. School/Department staffing and financial resources, including the leave of other members of faculty, may have a bearing on the quantity of leave awarded in each department.
- 2.8** In cases where more staff apply for leave than can be accommodated in a term in a given department, **applications will be prioritised according to the following criteria:**
- 1. Relevant EDI considerations (applicants with a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010, those returning from periods of maternity, adoption or shared parental leave);*
  - 2. Career stage of the applicant, with priority given to early career academics;*
  - 3. Length of time since the applicant last had leave.*
- Heads of Department will be asked to rank leave applications based on the criteria outlined above and this will be noted by the MAH Leave Committee when awarding leave. *The MAH Leave Committee will also review applications on the basis of the planned outcomes of the leave and the relevance of these outcomes to the School's strategic aims and, where relevant, the upcoming REF submission.* Final decisions on leave awards are made by the MAH Leave Committee, which is chaired by the Associate Deans for Research and Education.
- 2.9** Those undertaking **School Senior Leadership roles** (Head of Department and Associate Dean) are eligible to apply for one term's leave after three academic cycles in the usual way, and for appointments made *before August 2023* local agreements on *extended* periods of leave following a School Leadership role will be honoured.
- 2.10** **For School Leadership roles appointed after August 2023**, post-holders will *not* be automatically eligible for *extended* or *additional* periods of leave, *unless* they have extended their term in the leadership role, or they have been unable to take research leave for a period of 5 years (10 semesters or 15 terms) or more. For information on other mitigations for School Leadership roles and their effect on research and scholarship time, please refer to the [Reward and Recognition for School Leadership Roles policy](#).
- 2.11** Holders of all administrative roles (including School leadership roles) are normally expected to complete their term in the role before taking leave. In exceptional cases, this may be varied if requested, as long as the variation meets both the School's and the University's needs (including business needs).
- 2.12** If a period of leave is disrupted by unanticipated events (for instance a period of severe illness) then the faculty member concerned should discuss with their Head of Department a potential reduction in the following year's PAW to mitigate that disruption (subject to teaching commitments). Disrupted leave cannot normally be repeated.
- 2.13** A return from leave report will be required within a month of the leave period ending. Failure to supply a report, or a substantial and unexplained discrepancy between the work proposed and the work completed will impact the Committee's consideration of subsequent applications for leave.

### 3. PROCESS

- 3.1 Leave Applications are sent by the applicant to [mah-research@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:mah-research@sussex.ac.uk) by the deadline advised by the Leave Committee, as circulated in the Dean's Update. **Late applications without mitigating circumstances will not be considered.** In the case of mitigating circumstances, these will need agreement from the Head of Department or Dean before an application can be considered.
- 3.2 The application will then be sent to the relevant Head of Department for their recommendation, who will return it to the MAH Leave Committee. The full application, including aims for the leave period, will be evaluated by the MAH Leave Committee, after which the applicant will be informed of the result.
- 3.3 Where applications are not supported by the Head of Department due to resourcing issues (too many leave applications for a given academic year) the Leave Committee will review the Head of Department's recommendations (see 2.8 above) and approve the final leave allocation for the department in question. When notified of the outcome of their application, unsuccessful applicants will receive a short explanation and a recommendation for next steps, which will normally involve deferring leave by one or more terms. In this case, the applicant will not need to re-apply for leave in the next round unless the aims of their leave substantially change.
- 3.4 Appeals against Leave Committee decisions are only possible in the case of alleged procedural irregularity and should be taken up through the University's central complaints process.
- 3.5 Faculty whose applications are recommended by the Leave Committee will be formally contacted to confirm the period of leave awarded, with a copy sent to the Head of Department and Human Resources.

*Approved June 2022*

**Updated February 2024** to include new information on School Leadership roles and leave.

### **Appendix: Other School policies which relate to School funded leave**

[Assessment marking responsibilities while on leave](#)

[Reward and Recognition for School Leadership Roles policy](#)