

Aberystwyth University Research Leave Policy: T&R Staff ¹

Revised June 2023

Research is the lifeblood of a University. It enhances our teaching, advances human understanding and contributes to social and economic well-being. Aberystwyth University is a research-led university and, as such, is committed to providing the means to allow staff to undertake research.

Research leave refers to a period where staff focus (almost) exclusively on research. It is managed by Faculties within these University-wide principles and procedures.

1. Terminology

'University Research Leave' is a period of at least one semester² away from workload allocated duties that is funded by Aberystwyth University through salary. The specific dates of the leave period will normally follow the University calendar for semesters, but may be at the recommendation of the applicant's department to allow for local requirements.

'Short Research Leave' is a period of between 1 week up to a maximum of four weeks within a semester. It may be unfunded or funded externally – for example, if a researcher has 10% of their time allocated to an externally funded research project they may choose to take this as a block of time.³

'Externally Funded Research Leave' is a period where staff focus (almost) exclusively on research. It is usually of at least one semester and replacement teaching (and/or administrative duties) are funded by an external funder.

'Research Impact Leave' is a separate scheme available to staff to enable impact and knowledge exchange. More details are available [here](#).

Research Boost Leave is a separate, competitive scheme not covered by this paper. Details can be found at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/rbi/documents/Research-Boost-Leave.pdf>

'Workload allocated duties' are understood in this document to refer to those duties identified in the WAMM but excluding research, innovation, impact and knowledge exchange.

¹ This paper addresses staff on T&R contracts only. Separate policies for staff on RO contracts, and staff moving from T&S to T&R will be considered subsequent to revisions of this policy.

² Periods of leave away from workload allocated duties, for the purposes of research, of less than one semester in length may be granted on an ad hoc basis at the discretion of the department/ faculty but is outside of the University Research Leave process described in this policy.

³ Short research leave may also be considered by departments as a means of supporting staff on T&S contracts who are moving to T&R contracts.

2. **University Research Leave: Principles**

- a) Research needs to be a continuous activity, built into the academic life of Aberystwyth University and generating a culture of research-led teaching. Undertaking high-quality research should not depend on time away from workload allocated duties.⁴
- b) The purpose of University Research Leave is to enhance research, and contribute to the University Research and Innovation Strategy, by supporting and accelerating the contribution of research outputs and research grant applications by academic members of staff.
- c) University Research Leave is a distinct aspect of Aberystwyth University's academic support for research. It is *not* an entitlement, and *will only* be granted against an application that demonstrates planned work of an excellent quality and ambition in relation to its originality, significance and rigour or which has genuine potential in terms of major grant capture.
- d) All applications should specify an intellectually ambitious and credible project or programme of work which is commensurate with the amount of time requested.
- e) This is a University scheme, but it is managed and applied at Faculty level.
- f) Since staff on University Research Leave will not usually be backfilled, there will be an impact on departmental teaching and administrative arrangements. It is the responsibility of the relevant HoD (working with the FPVC) to manage these to ensure all staff have access to the University Research Leave scheme. This is to ensure equality across the University. However, it is recognized that in some Departments there may be significant impacts caused by the scheme (usually a result of small size) and the Department may therefore decide that the overall costs **to research** in the Department are higher if the '1 in 6' norm is applied than by retaining the current level of provision. Retaining this would require the approval of the appropriate FPVC **and** PVC (R, KE &I).
- g) University Research Leave may be taken at Aberystwyth University, or may involve the whole, or portions, of the period away from Aberystwyth University. (Note: If some or all of the leave is taken away from Aberystwyth, staff will be expected to follow then-current risk assessment guidelines).
- h) This policy is subject to review by the Research Committee on a biannual basis, making recommendations to University Executive and Senate as appropriate.

3. **Short Research Leave**

It is recognized that opportunities may exist for academic staff on T&R contracts to take short periods of time away from workload allocated duties in order to focus solely on research. This may be either because of fractional commitments to externally funded research grants, because of opportunities within the teaching and administrative programme, or to address a specific requirement (e.g. short notice grant call)..

All applications should specify an intellectually ambitious and credible project or programme of work which is commensurate with the amount of time requested.

A separate 'light touch' application process will be used.

⁴ Other periods of focussed research time could potentially be achieved through constructive timetabling and flexible sharing of teaching amongst colleagues.

Applications will be assessed by departments with an annual departmental report to the relevant FPVC and Research Committee.

4. Eligibility

(i) University Research Leave:

We will work towards a level of provision where any member of staff employed on a Teaching and Research contract of 0.2 FTE or greater is eligible to apply for one semester of University Research Leave in every six semesters. That is, *after* five semesters of workload allocated duties they are eligible to apply for a period of University Research Leave. If during this period a researcher has externally funded research leave, impact leave or research boost leave, this will not count towards the five semesters; however, semesters accrued prior to these other forms of leave will still count towards an accumulated total.

It is recognized that this '1 in 6' will prove challenging, but it is a target which departments should aspire to as a research-led University and work towards. Moving to a 1 in 6 may therefore take a period of time, and in the interim a '1 in 8' may be used.

Eligibility to apply for University Research Leave is subject to the following considerations:

- The continuity of service may be accrued on eligible, fixed term or open ended contracts, or a combination of both. Staff on a fixed term contract must have a contract that covers the period of research leave applied for.
- AU wishes to support the development of ECRs and recognizes the particular pressures on them. ECRs are therefore eligible to apply for their first semester of University Research Leave after four semesters of workload allocated duties.

(ii) Short Research Leave

Any member of staff employed on a Teaching and Research contract of 0.2 FTE or greater is eligible to apply for short research leave. A period of short research leave will count towards the accumulation of semesters prior to a period of University Research Leave – that is, 'the clock will not stop'. The leave taken will usually be part of the WAMM allocation, but in exceptional circumstances may supplement it at the HoDs discretion (unless it is funded as part of a research grant).

(iii) Externally Funded Research Leave:

- Any member of staff employed on a Teaching and Research contract of 0.2 FTE or greater is eligible to apply for Externally Funded Research Leave of any interval, subject to the following considerations:
- Applicants for Externally Funded Research Leave will need to have the approval of their HoD or nominated Faculty RG1 signatory as part of the usual Aberystwyth University grant application procedure.
- The minimum duration of Externally Funded Research Leave is one semester.
- Externally Funded Research Leave must, as a minimum, cover full teaching and administrative duties and ideally provide significant buyout of the staff member's

time. This should be discussed with the HoD or FPVC prior to commencing an application for external funding. Sufficient time must be planned for recruiting any additional staff required prior to the research leave commencing.

5. General conditions

- a) The granting of University Research Leave is ultimately at the approval of the relevant Faculty Pro- Vice Chancellor.
- b) The granting of University Research Leave is conditional upon the Faculty Pro- Vice Chancellor being made confident that adequate arrangements to provide cover during the period away from workload allocated duties (usually teaching, examining and administrative cover) can be made available within, or to, the applicant's department. Teaching cover arrangements must also be within current teaching and learning guidelines and must not reduce the quality of the student learning experience, especially in regard to the provision of Welsh language teaching and student support.
- c) Staff on Research Leave will normally continue supervision of their PhD students unless satisfactory departmental arrangements exist as confirmed to the Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor.
- d) Prospective recipients of University Research Leave are expected to plan well-ahead. This should include the planning of research-grant applications to support the costs of research and travel, as University Research Leave carries no support for, or contribution to, travel or other expenses.
- e) No other paid post may be held during the period on Research Leave, except by permission of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research, KE & Innovation). Normal university rules apply to any consultancy work undertaken.
- f) Time spent on Externally Funded Research Leave counts towards University Research Leave accrual i.e. as part of the continuous period of service over eight semesters.
- g) Time spent on maternity or paternity leave counts towards University Research Leave accrual i.e. as part of the continuous period of service over eight semesters.
- h) Time spent on Research Impact Leave counts towards University Research Leave accrual i.e. as part of the continuous period of service over eight semesters.

6. Application procedure

- a) Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellors (or Associate Deans of Research) will open applications to eligible members of their Faculty for University Research Leave at the start of each academic year.
- b) Applications should be submitted by 21 December of each year, to allow sufficient time for applications to be considered for the following academic year.
- c) Applicants for University Research Leave should normally submit their applications to their departmental research lead in the first instance. The University Research Leave Application and Report Form can be found [here](#).
- d) Applicants should specify the reason for their University Research Leave, the anticipated outputs, and their timescales against which the effectiveness of the time on research can be evaluated. Applicants must always discuss their case with collaborators, research leads, Associate Deans of Research, mentor and/or other colleagues, setting it within appropriate broader research strategies.

- e) The departmental research lead, departmental learning and teaching lead, and HoD (where different) will be asked to: confirm the applicant's eligibility to apply; comment on the strength and ambition of the application in relation to the individual's previous research performance; confirm that the proposed cover is available and adequate e.g. teaching cover within current teaching and learning guidelines.
- f) All University Research Leave applications within a Faculty should be forwarded for consideration by a Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor nominated Research Leave Evaluation Group (suggested membership consisting of: Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor, Associate Dean of Research and departmental research leads, if not also HoD)⁴.
- g) The Faculty Research Leave Evaluation Group will consider the application in light of: the department's comments on the strength of the application and the arrangements available for cover; the application's fit with the University research strategy and Faculty research priorities; the success of reports from previous periods of Research Leave; whether the applicant was submitted to the previous REF.
- h) The Faculty Research Leave Evaluation Group will feedback the outcomes of the application approval process to all applicants and the relevant HoD.
- i) All successful periods of University Research Leave applied for will be recorded against the relevant staff member within Pobl Aber People.

Reporting procedure following the period of research leave

- _The Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor (or nominee within the Faculty) will remind staff at the end of their period of University Research Leave to submit a report on their activity within one month of the end of the leave period. This should be undertaken by updating their application form, which includes space to report against planned activity.
- _This report should normally be returned to the departmental research lead. It will be reviewed by the Faculty Research Leave Evaluation Group, and feedback will be provided to the member of staff. The University Research Leave completion report and its review should be appended to the individual's Personal Research Plan (PeRP).
- _The Faculty Research Leave Evaluation Group should normally meet twice a year (once each semester) in order to review the University Research Leave completion reports from leave taken within the previous semester.
- _The Faculty Research Leave Evaluation Group should subsequently prepare a summary of all University Research Leave completion reports and their reviews, for the first Research Committee Executive meeting of the next academic year.
- _The Research Committee Executive should confirm they approve the evaluations made by each Faculty, including confirmation of whether an individual is deemed to have delivered a satisfactory outcome from their period of University Research leave or not.
- _If an individual is deemed to have not delivered a satisfactory outcome from their period of University Research leave, the relevant Faculty should provide mentoring to the individual so that they can subsequently achieve the set outcomes where these are still appropriate.
- _Where a satisfactory outcome can still not be achieved, this may count against an individual's subsequent application for Research Leave (either University or External).

Equality Impact Assessment

HR will provide an annual equality impact assessment for the first Research Committee Executive meeting of the third academic term of the year (and prior to the start of the next academic year/ first periods of University Research Leave to be taken) on applicant eligibility and Research Leave allocation by Faculties. This is in order to assess any unintended discrimination on the basis of gender, career stage / job role, ethnicity, FTE status, etc.