



# Study Leave Policy

**Responsibility for policy:** Director of Human Resource Management

**Approving authority:** Vice-Chancellor

**Last reviewed:** September 2016

**Next review:** September 2021

## Application

1. This policy applies to academic staff of the University of Waikato who are eligible under the terms of their employment agreement to apply for study leave.

## Purpose

2. The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework within which decisions about study leave are made, and the associated rights and responsibilities of staff and the University.

## Relevant documents

3. The following documents set out further information relevant to this policy:
  - [Academic Workloads Guidelines](#)
  - [Annual Leave Management Policy](#)
  - [Financial Ethics Policy](#)
  - [PCard Policy](#)
  - [Staff Code of Conduct](#)
  - [Travel Policy](#)
  - University of Waikato Collective and Individual Employment Agreements

## Definitions

4. In this policy,
  - study leave** means a period of leave to allow academic staff to undertake research and academic activities which
    - are aligned with the University's Vision and strategic goals, and
    - are of a kind or to an extent that cannot be pursued during the course of normal employment, and
    - enable staff to fulfil one or both of the following key objectives:
      - develop and enhance knowledge, research, teaching and professional capabilities
      - foster connections with colleagues, academic institutions, businesses, governmental and other organisations both internationally and within New Zealand (study leave normally includes time spent at another University or research institution overseas).
  - study leave credit** means the amount of study leave which a staff member may apply to take, credited on the basis of qualifying service.
  - qualifying service** means continuing service at the University of Waikato in an academic position which allows the staff member to accumulate study leave credit.

## Principles

5. The University recognises that a well-managed system of study leave provides a mechanism for contributing directly to the University's Vision, by enabling the development of excellence, distinctiveness and international connectedness in teaching and research.
6. The value of study leave is measured by its usefulness to the University's programme of teaching and research, the individual's professional development, and the strategic objectives of the University.
7. Study leave is a form of service to the University with associated obligations and accountabilities; it is extended to academic staff to enable them to undertake agreed academic activities and fulfil particular objectives over an extended period.

8. Study leave is neither a right nor an entitlement; approval is at the discretion of the University.
9. Staff on study leave receive their salary and some other allowances.
10. Effective planning for study leave is essential, so that the teaching, learning and research activities of the University are not disrupted by individual study leave plans.
11. The following underpin the process by which study leave applications are considered:
  - the teaching needs of the University are of paramount importance;
  - colleagues should not suffer an unreasonable burden as a result of a staff member's leave; in practice, this means that a staff member is expected to carry an extra teaching load before and after taking leave, and must carry out any assessment and examination duties before taking leave;
  - any contractual or other relevant research obligations must be met;
  - staff members are required to return from leave in good time to prepare for resumption of their regular duties.
12. Academic staff are expected to pursue the purposes for which the leave was granted conscientiously, effectively and in good faith.

### **Qualifying service for study leave credit**

13. Qualifying service generates study leave credit which is recorded by the Director of Human Resource Management; the Director of Human Resource Management has authority to determine a staff member's study leave credit.
14. Parental leave counts as qualifying service.
15. The following do not count as qualifying service:
  - periods of time spent on study leave (subject to section 44 below, qualifying service will resume on the date of return to regular duties after a period of study leave)
  - periods of leave without pay over and above four weeks
  - periods of exchange leave
  - previous service at other institutions, unless agreed otherwise at appointment as provided under sections 19-21 below.

### **Rates of accruing study leave credit**

16. Staff at the grades of professor, associate professor, senior lecturer, senior research fellow, lecturer, and research fellow, and any other staff approved for this purpose by the Vice-Chancellor, accrue study leave credit at the rate of 8 weeks' study leave for each year of service and pro rata for lesser periods, up to a maximum of 48 weeks.
17. Staff at the grade of assistant lecturer accrue study leave credit at the rate of 4 weeks' study leave for each year of service and pro rata for lesser periods, up to a maximum of 16 weeks.
18. Part-time staff accrue study leave credit at the same rate as full-time staff; however, when the study leave is taken, the salary is paid to part-time staff on the relevant pro-rata basis.

### **Previous service at other universities**

19. Previous service at another New Zealand university at the grade of lecturer or above may be counted towards study leave credit at the University of Waikato at the rate of 4 weeks' study leave for each year of service, and pro rata for lesser periods, up to a maximum of 16 weeks' study leave, provided that
  - study leave has not already been taken at the other university in respect of that service
  - application to count the previous service is made at the time of appointment to the University of Waikato, accompanied by all records and information required by the Director of Human Resource Management.
20. Consideration may be given to counting previous service at an overseas university towards study leave credit at the University of Waikato, up to a maximum of 16 weeks, provided that
  - study leave has not already been taken at the other university in respect of that service
  - application to count the previous service is made at the time of appointment to the University of Waikato, accompanied by full details of:

- the applicant's previous study leave credit,
  - the normal provisions for study leave that apply at the overseas university,
  - reasons why the study leave has not been taken, and
  - any other information required by the Director of Human Resource Management.
21. The Director of Human Resource Management will consult with the relevant Dean in determining what, if any, study leave credit is to be counted in respect of applications made under sections 19 and 20 above.

#### **Study leave credit is non-transferable**

22. Study leave credit may not be converted into annual leave or redeemed for payment of any kind.

#### **Eligibility to apply for study leave**

23. A member of staff is not eligible to apply for study leave until he or she has completed two years in a continuing academic role at the University of Waikato; a Dean may allow a staff member to apply for study leave earlier but only in exceptional circumstances.
24. Staff are eligible to apply for study leave up to the maximum of their study leave credit.
25. Study leave credit does not, of itself, give the staff member an entitlement to take study leave.

#### **Maximum periods of study leave**

26. Any absence from the University for more than 4 weeks in order to undertake activities that comply with the definition of study leave in section 4, must be treated and recorded as study leave.
27. The maximum period of study leave in one continuous period is 48 weeks; a staff member who takes 48 weeks of study leave may not take more than 4 weeks of annual leave consecutively with the study leave.
28. The minimum period required to be worked at the University between periods of study leave is subject to the discretion of the relevant Dean.

#### **Approval of study leave applications**

29. Authority to approve study leave applications rests with the relevant Dean.
30. Each Dean has authority to determine the approval processes and criteria for study leave in his or her Faculty, School or equivalent provided that they are consistent with this policy.
31. An application for study leave must be submitted on the University's [Study Leave Application Form](#) to the relevant Chairperson of Department, Head of School or equivalent for consideration in the first instance; the Chairperson, Head or equivalent will make a recommendation to the Dean with respect to the approval (or otherwise) of the study leave application.
32. In considering an application for study leave, the relevant Chairperson of Department, Head of School or equivalent and Dean will take account of the overall purpose of study leave and also:
- the staff member's study leave credit
  - rigorous evaluation of the staff member's delivery of agreed outcomes during any previous study leave
  - whether satisfactory arrangements can be made by Departments, Schools or equivalent, and the University generally, for maintaining teaching, research (including externally funded research contracts), student research supervision and administrative functions during the proposed absence of the staff member
  - whether the study leave objectives will enable the staff member to extend significantly their capabilities in teaching and research, and/or any other specific responsibilities outlined in their employment agreement
  - whether the study leave objectives will deliver outcomes that will assist the University in meeting relevant quality standards and targets (e.g. the Performance-Based Research Fund)
  - any other specific criteria defined within the Faculty, School or equivalent concerned
  - the overall plan for leave, teaching, research and workload arrangements for the Department, School or equivalent over the period concerned.

33. Study leave is not intended to be used for the purposes of completing a higher degree and may not be used for that purpose unless agreed by the Dean otherwise for that particular Faculty, School or equivalent.

#### **Study leave administration**

34. The Dean will inform the applicant of his or her decision in writing; if the study leave is approved, the Dean will specify any terms, including dates of absence and reporting deadlines.

35. Where study leave has been approved, the Dean will send a copy of his or her decision to the Director of Human Resource Management, who will

- record the approved leave and adjust the staff member's study leave credit balance accordingly
- calculate the allowances for which the staff member is eligible (refer [Appendix 1](#)), and
- advise the staff member in writing of the applicable allowances.

36. A staff member who wishes to make changes to a study leave plan after it has been approved must notify the relevant Chairperson of Department, Head of School or equivalent and Dean at the earliest possible opportunity; such changes are subject to the approval of the Dean, in consultation with the Chairperson, Head or equivalent.

#### **Review of declined applications**

37. A staff member whose application for study leave is declined by his or her Dean may seek a review of the decision.

38. Requests for review must be made in writing to the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

39. Authority to review the decision of a Dean with respect to an application for study leave rests with the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who will consult the Director of Human Resource Management, the relevant Dean and the staff member before making a decision; where the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor considers that an application should be declined, or approved only subject to certain conditions, he or she will discuss the matter with the staff member concerned and take their comments into consideration before making a final decision.

40. The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor will advise the staff member, relevant Dean, and the Director of Human Resource Management in writing of his or her decision.

#### **Accountability for leave**

41. Academic staff are accountable to the University for the fulfilment of approved study leave objectives.

42. Within two months of return to regular duties, the staff member must provide a report to the relevant Chairperson of Department, Head of School or equivalent on the University's [Study Leave Report Form](#); the report must include details of the extent to which the proposed outcomes listed in the approved study leave application have been achieved.

43. Study leave reports will be assessed on the basis of the extent to which the outcomes listed in the approved study leave application have been achieved.

44. A Chairperson of Department, Head of School or equivalent may discuss a study leave report with a staff member and propose changes before it is referred to the relevant Dean for decision.

45. The Chairperson of Department, Head of School or equivalent will make a recommendation to the Dean with respect to the approval (or otherwise) of the study leave report.

46. Where the Dean has not received a study leave report which he or she has assessed to be satisfactory within four months of the staff member's return to regular duties, qualifying service will then cease and not recommence until a satisfactory report has been received.

47. Subject to sections 49-50 below, authority to approve study leave reports rests with the relevant Dean.

48. Where a Dean approves a study leave report, he or she will provide a copy of the report and decision to the staff member, the Chairperson of Department, Head of School or equivalent, the Director of Human Resource Management, and the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

49. Where a Dean is of the view that a study leave report is unsatisfactory, or satisfactory only subject to certain conditions, he or she will provide a copy of the report and decision to the staff member, the Chairperson of Department, Head of School or equivalent, the Director of Human Resource Management and the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
50. Authority to make decisions with respect to study leave reports referred to him or her under section 49 rests with the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who will consult with the Director of Human Resource Management, the relevant Dean and the staff member before making a decision; where the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor considers that a study leave report should be declined, or approved only subject to certain conditions, he or she will discuss the matter with the staff member concerned and take the staff member's comments into consideration before making a final decision.
51. The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor will advise the staff member, relevant Dean, and the Director of Human Resource Management in writing of his or her decision.
52. Where the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor decides, under section 50, to decline a study leave report, or only approve it subject to certain conditions, the relevant Dean has authority to:
  - decline approval of any future study leave applications by the staff member concerned, and/or
  - take any other action he or she considers appropriate to address the matter.
53. The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor will provide to the Academic Board annually a high-level report on study leave activities, outcomes and impacts for the previous year.

#### **Management of study leave plans**

54. Each Chairperson of Department, Head of School or equivalent is required to maintain a two year forward plan of study leave, which takes account of all teaching, research supervision, contractual, and administrative obligations for the Department, School or equivalent.

#### **Study leave allowances**

55. The University recognises that staff members incur substantial costs in taking study leave and contributes to these costs through study leave allowances which may be paid to a staff member in addition to his or her normal salary for the agreed period of study leave; the formula for calculating allowances is set out in [Appendix 1](#).
56. Staff are responsible for making their own arrangements for travel insurance, and may use part of their allowances to cover the cost; the University will not meet the cost of travel insurance separately. (Details of discounted travel insurance rates are included in [Appendix 1](#).)
57. The Director of Human Resource Management will calculate study leave allowances commensurate with the approved travel plans and within the limits defined in [Appendix 1](#), and advise the staff member accordingly.
58. Approved study leave allowances may be paid to the staff member in advance, but not more than six months before departure.
59. For tax and audit compliance purposes, study leave allowances may be used for actual and reasonable expenses only and must be supported by receipts and/or invoices; the staff member must submit to the Director of Human Resource Management a costs and expenditure return in respect of the study leave allowance within two months of completing the study leave. (See also section 66 below.)

#### **Provision for the University to require salaries and allowances to be repaid**

60. Salary and allowances for study leave are paid by the University to a staff member in good faith on the basis that the study leave programme will be undertaken as agreed between the staff member and the University.
61. A member of staff who does not return to duties at the University at the end of a period of study leave, or who resigns or retires from the University with effect from a date within 16 weeks of the agreed date of return, will be required to refund the University both salary and expense allowances in respect of that period of leave.

62. A staff member who resigns or retires from the University with effect more than 16 weeks after the agreed date of return from study leave, but before the completion of one year of further service, will be required to refund a proportion of the expense allowances paid in respect of that period of leave; the amount to be refunded will be determined by the Director of Human Resource Management.
63. A staff member who retires from the University within two years following the end of a period of study leave will not be eligible for a retirement gratuity.

#### **Other financial assistance**

64. Applicants for study leave are required to declare on the application form any expected financial or other assistance relating to the period of leave, either from within the University or from external sources; this declaration may be taken into account by the University in determining the amount of study leave allowance to be paid to the staff member.
65. In recognition that financial or other assistance from sources external to the University may facilitate and enhance study leave, the University encourages applicants to seek and accept external assistance, provided that it does not unduly constrain or impede the approved study leave objectives; for example:
- the assistance should not be conditional on significant time being taken in activities not central to the purposes for which leave is granted
  - the assistance should not impose constraints on rights to publish freely the results of research undertaken while on leave.
66. Within two months of their return from study leave, staff must declare all actual financial and other assistance received during the study leave period, either from within the University or from external sources; this declaration must be made in conjunction with the costs and expenditure return required under section 59 above.
67. With reference to actual and reasonable expenses incurred by the staff member in a period of study leave, the Director of Human Resource Management, after consultation with the relevant Dean, has authority to adjust the study leave allowances payable by the University in respect of any other internal or external financial assistance from University research accounts or from any other internal or external sources declared under section 66.

#### **Authority to vary or waive the provisions of this policy**

68. Only the Vice-Chancellor has the authority to vary or waive the provisions of this policy in individual cases.

#### **Breaches**

69. The Director of Human Resource Management is responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy and reporting any breaches to the Vice-Chancellor.
70. Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action under the [Staff Code of Conduct](#).

## Appendix 1

### Study Leave Allowances

These allowances apply to both fulltime and part-time staff.

Location of leave	Available allowances	Maximum
<b>New Zealand</b> (whether or not also spending part of the leave overseas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$200 per week for each complete week spent away from home within New Zealand, plus</li><li>• A lump sum of up to \$1,000</li></ul>	\$9,600  +1,000  <b>\$10,600</b>
<b>Oceania (Australia and Pacific Islands)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$300 per week for each complete week spent in 'Oceania' (maximum 48 weeks), plus</li><li>• A lump sum of \$2,000 for staff taking leave within 'Oceania' for a period of at least 3 weeks</li></ul>	\$14,400  +\$2,000  <b>\$16,400</b>
<b>Beyond Oceania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$350 per week for each complete week spent overseas 'Beyond Oceania' (maximum 48 weeks), plus</li><li>• A lump sum of \$4,000 for staff taking leave 'Beyond Oceania' for a period of at least 3 weeks.</li></ul>	\$16,800  +\$4,000  <b>\$20,800</b>

#### OVERALL LIMITS

1. In any six year period, the maximum allowance payable is \$20,800 (calculated on the basis that all of the study leave is spent 'Beyond Oceania').
2. Regardless of the combination of locations where study leave is undertaken, under no circumstances will a lump sum of more than \$4,000 be paid.
3. Staff taking leave in 'Oceania' and 'Beyond Oceania' for less than three weeks in either location, but for three weeks or more in total, are eligible for a lump sum payment of \$2,000.

#### Travel Insurance

Arrangements have been made for the University's travel management company, Orbit Corporate Travel, to make available a discounted rate for travel insurance. Staff can take advantage of this arrangement whether or not airfares relating to their study leave are booked through Orbit. The arrangement is entirely voluntary and staff members may choose their own insurance provider if they wish. Staff who do wish to take up the Orbit offer should contact [unileisure@orbit.co.nz](mailto:unileisure@orbit.co.nz) stating their requirements.