

Academic Study Leave

Policy and Guidelines

King's supports academic staff in developing their expertise to contribute to both their field and the university's learning environment. As part of this commitment, the university offers academic staff the opportunity to apply for academic study leave.

Academic study leave can be used for research, educational projects, or other work relevant to the employee's academic specialism. For those on the Academic Education Pathway (AEP), study leave should focus on educational innovation, enhancement, or significant research and scholarship in education. Academic study leave is not an automatic entitlement, and its approval should provide clear benefits to both the employee and the University.

Study leave may be granted for a maximum of one year, either with or without pay.

Essential Information

Academic and Academic Education Pathway employees with three or more years' continuous service are eligible to apply for academic study leave. Continuous service is calculated at the point of commencement of the proposed leave and includes any periods of family leave.

Academic study leave can be paid or unpaid and can be taken for up to a maximum of one year.

Employees who do not have the permanent right to work in the UK, may not be able to take academic study leave and applicants should discuss this with the [Immigration Team](#) before applying.

Academic Study leave is granted at the discretion of the university by either; the Head of Department, for applications up to one month, or the Executive Dean for applications over one month. Employees with formal clinical commitments must also obtain written agreement of the Medical Director of the relevant NHS Trust.

Each Faculty will develop and operate its own policy on study leave within these university-wide guidelines, granting leave with consideration of the impact on workloads and teaching needs. Disruption to teaching programmes should be kept to a minimum.

Following a period of academic study leave employees will need to accrue a further three years' continuous service from the date of their return to duties before being eligible to apply for a further period of academic study leave.

How to Apply

In the first instance, employees who are considering applying for academic study leave should discuss this with their manager, ideally as part of the annual Personal Development Review.

Formal applications should be made using the academic study leave application form.

Short term applications

Applications for academic study leave of less than one month, should be submitted at least three months in advance of the proposed start date, to the Head of Department using the application form.

The application should state the purpose and dates of the leave and include a statement of the proposed benefits and outcomes for the employee and University.

Long term applications

Applications for academic study leave over one month should be submitted, using the application form, by 31 December and at least six months before the first day of term of which the leave is requested.

The application should

- state the purpose and dates of the leave
- include a statement of the proposed benefits and outcomes for the employee and University
- include commentary from the Head of Department detailing the impact of the leave on the University and how this will be addressed

Academic employees are encouraged to seek external support such as grants, fellowships or secondments to facilitate study leave, where this is obtained the study leave will be unpaid.

The application will be considered for approval by the Executive Dean. In the case of staff with formal clinical commitments written confirmation of the agreement of the Medical Director of the relevant NHS Trust must be included.

Approved Applications

If approved, the academic study leave should be recorded through PeopleXD, if the leave is unpaid a [managers request](#) will also need to be submitted.

On the employee's return to duties the employee shall present the Executive Dean and Head of Department with a short synopsis of the value of the leave, including a plan for future developments.

Things to Think About

Academic Study Leave Overseas

Periods of academic study leave requiring travel outside the UK could attract tax and social security implications, for employees and King's, as they are considered as business travel.

If there is any planned overseas travel during the Academic Study Leave employees must consult the university information and guidance on [overseas working](#) or contact the [Global Staff Mobility Team](#), before applying, for further advice.

Any additional costs associated with overseas working, such as higher social security and/or tax contributions or maintaining an overseas payroll, will need to be covered by the faculty/school/department or, where applicable, research grant funders.

Terms and Condition of Employment

It is important to understand that certain terms and conditions of the contract of employment will continue to apply whilst on academic study leave. This includes, notice periods, the duty not to disclose confidential information and disclosure of interests.

National Insurance and Pension contributions

Periods of unpaid leave will mean the national insurance and pension contributions will cease and the Death in Service benefit may also be impacted.

Employees can choose to make a [voluntary national insurance](#) contribution to minimise any impact on their entitlement to state benefits.

Employees should contact the [Pensions Team](#) to discuss the possibility of continuing contributions during unpaid leave.

For periods of paid academic study leave contributions to national insurance and pension will continue.

Adoption, Maternity, Neonatal, Shared Parental or Paternity and Partners Pay

A period of unpaid leave may affect entitlement to Statutory Adoption, Maternity, Neonatal, Shared Parental or Paternity and Partners Pay as this is calculated on the basis of average earnings. The university occupational schemes will not be affected.

Organisational Change

Should a restructuring occur when an employee is on academic study leave, the employee will be contacted regarding this and the [Regulation Pertaining to Redundancy Procedure for Academic Staff](#), the [Change Management Policy and Guidance](#), or another appropriate policy or procedure will be applied.

Keeping in Touch

Employees on academic study leave should provide contact details for the period of leave and notify the University if these details change.

It is recommended that the employee and manager discuss what kind of contact there will be in advance of the leave commencing and maintain reasonable contact to make the return to work easier for both parties.

The Head of Department/manager is responsible for keeping an employee informed of any significant workplace developments which may be relevant to their employment during academic study leave.

Return to Duties

On the employee's return to normal duties, the manager should ensure that a comprehensive re-induction process is put in place which includes, for example, training on any new systems or procedures that have been

introduced during the period of absence and briefing on any changes that will affect them such as pay awards, reorganisations or new legislation.

On the employee's return to work the employee shall present the Executive Dean and Head of Department with a short synopsis of the value of the leave, including a plan for future developments.

Version Control

Policy name	Academic Study Leave
Implementation date	Pre-2011
Last reviewed	01/04/2025
Policy owner	Employee Relations and Policy Team