

## Study Leave Policy

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## 1. Policy

- 1.1 The aim of the University's Study Leave Policy is to set out the University's approach to study leave and the basis on which it may be taken.
- 1.2 St Mary's University acknowledges its responsibility to support the professional and personal development of its staff. Encouraging staff to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies supports the Developing Our People Pillar within Vision 2030. The University recognises the benefits of study leave in fostering innovation, creativity, and continued professional development.

## 2. Scope of the Procedure

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff ensuring inclusivity as set out in SMU's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- 2.2 It applies to all substantive staff regardless of whether they are full-time, part-time or on a fixed-term contract.
- 2.3 Study leave refers to time away from work for purposes such as:
  - a. Academic Study
  - b. Professional training
  - c. Personal development or skill acquisition
- 2.4 Study leave is not an automatic entitlement or contractual right, but requests will be reviewed fairly and consistently. Each department is responsible for managing study leave requests while ensuring business continuity. The University promotes equal opportunities and work-life balance in its approach to study leave.
- 2.5 Paid study leave is only granted for exams or formal assessments that contribute to your final result, but not for completing coursework, assignments, or self-study. Employees are expected to complete such tasks outside working hours.
- 2.6 Paid study leave is only granted for qualifications funded by the University via its [Qualification Funding](#) scheme.
- 2.7 For academic staff, time for additional training where attendance/compliance is required and monitored by a recognised external agency should be captured in your workload planning (see section 7 in the [Workload Allocation Management Framework](#)).
- 2.8 For academic staff, extended time off to focus on research, teaching, or enterprise and engagement can be requested under the [Sabbatical Policy and Procedure](#).
- 2.9 For employees undertaking a Staff Apprenticeship, all activities related to the End-Point Assessment (EPA) must be completed within working hours. There is no need to request annual leave or paid/unpaid study leave for EPA completion.

## 3. Study Leave Entitlement

- 3.1 Paid Study Leave:** Employees undertaking study or training and who have been awarded [Qualification Funding](#) by the University may receive up to five days of paid study leave per academic year. Part-time and fixed-term employees receive a pro-rata allowance. Agreement would have been obtained from your line manager at the point of application for Qualification Funding.

**3.2 Unpaid Study Leave (statutory entitlement):** Employees with a minimum of 26 weeks' continuous service have a [statutory right](#) to request unpaid study or training leave ('time off to train') where the training or study is relevant to the employee's role within the University. Unpaid study leave may be granted at the discretion of the line manager or Dean/Director. There is no legal limit on the duration of study leave that can be requested.

## 4. Application Process - Unpaid Study Leave

### 4.1 Application

- 4.1.1 Unpaid study leave requests should be discussed informally with the appropriate line manager, prior to a formal application being made.
- 4.1.2 Employees must submit a written request using the **Study Leave Request Form** to the appropriate line manager at least four weeks in advance of the start date of requested leave.
- 4.1.3 Requests may not be submitted more than once every 12 months.

### 4.2 Meeting

- 4.2.1 A meeting will be arranged within 28 days to discuss the request. Employees have the right to be accompanied by a recognised Trade Union Representative, or work colleague.
- 4.2.2 If the employee and/or their representative cannot attend the meeting on the proposed day and time, the meeting will be postponed to an alternative day and time, normally within 5 days of the original meeting.
- 4.2.3 The line manager will assess the request based on:
  - whether this study or training will improve the employee's effectiveness at work and the performance of the business of the University
  - the time commitment required
  - the impact on workload
  - operational feasibility.

### 4.3 Outcome

- 4.3.1 Notification of the outcome of the meeting will normally be sent to the employee within 5 working days of the meeting taking place. If a request is denied, clear reasons will be provided. See a list of [possible reasons why a request might be turned down](#).
- 4.3.2 No application will be approved or rejected without consultation with the relevant senior manager and Human Resources, to ensure consistency across the department/University.

### 4.4 Appealing the Decision

- 4.4.1 Employees have the right to appeal if their employer refuses a request to take time off for training or study. This must be made within 14 days of receipt of the decision and sent to the Director of Human Resources.

4.4.2 The appeal must:

- be in writing
- be dated
- set out why they're appealing - the grounds for the appeal

4.4.3 A meeting will be arranged with the employee to discuss the appeal within 14 days of getting the appeal.

4.4.4 The Chair of the appeal will be of a higher or equal seniority to the manager who made the original decision. They should not have had significant involvement in making the original decision. A member of Human Resources will attend the meeting.

4.4.5 The staff member may be accompanied at the meeting by a University recognised trade union representative or work colleague.

4.4.6 If the employee and/or their representative cannot attend the meeting on the proposed day and time, the meeting will be postponed to an alternative day and time, normally within 5 days of the original meeting.

## Relevant Policy Headings

[Qualification Funding Policy](#)

[Sabbatical Policy and Procedure](#)

[Workload Allocation Management Framework](#)

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## Appendix 1

### Study Leave Request Form



## Study Leave Request Form

Please use this form only if you are exercising a statutory right to time off for training or study under Section 63D of the Employment Rights Act 1996.

Section 1: Employee details	
Name:	
Job title:	
Department/Faculty:	
*Date of any previous application:	
**Date of continuous service:	

\*If this date is less than one year ago there is no right for this request to be considered.

\*\* Must have 26 weeks continuous service at the time of the application to exercise legal right.

Section 3: Details of request	
Start Date of Leave of Absence:	
Date of Return to Work:	
*Reason for Absence (e.g. examinations, coursework etc.):	

Section 4: Course Details			
Course title:			
Qualification/skills obtained at the end of the course (if any):			
Institution/provider of the course:			
Please explain how this training or study will improve your effectiveness in your role and contribute to the overall performance of the University:			
Section 5: Employee Signature			
Signature:		Date:	

### Section 6: Line manager Approval

Line Manager Name:

Please tick the appropriate response to the request:

- ☐ I agree to the request for study leave
- ☐ I do not agree to the request for study leave

### Section 7: Reason for non-agreement for request for study leave

Please tick the appropriate reason for not agreeing to the request for study leave:

- ☐ The request for unpaid study leave does not meet the criteria as set out in the Study Leave Policy.
- ☐ The training would not benefit the business of the University
- ☐ It would run up extra costs for the University
- ☐ This would impact the ability to meet customer demands
- ☐ I cannot re-organise the work among other members of staff
- ☐ I cannot recruit extra staff
- ☐ It would damage quality and business performance
- ☐ There would not be enough work for the employee to do at the times they intend to work
- ☐ It conflicts with planned structural changes
- ☐ Other

**Please expand:**