



GUIDELINES ON FREQUENCY OF ACADEMIC LEAVES FOR FACULTY

Revised November 14, 2023

Lehigh University encourages and supports members of its faculty advancing and enhancing their scholarly portfolios by taking advantage of experiences that can only be realized while on academic leave. The accomplishments that they can achieve by interacting with professional colleagues away from campus as well as focusing attention on their own on-going research projects for extended periods of time can provide substantial benefits to their own professional advancement and also to the greater campus community of Lehigh colleagues and students when they resume their regular research and scholarly, teaching, and service activities at the end of these leaves. While the Rules and Procedures (R&P) of the Faculty describe the basic types and rationales for faculty leaves, this policy document provides additional detail, especially with regard to the timing of academic leaves. The Guidelines provided here apply only to leaves with primarily an academic and/or an extramural service focus. Separate guidelines apply to leaves of absence taken for medical reasons as well as leaves of absence that comprise part of a retirement agreement.

Section 2.4 of the Rules and Procedures (R&P) of the Faculty enumerate and describe the types of leave that are available to faculty members:

2.4 Leave of absence

1. The university recognizes three types of leave that are available to faculty members of professorial rank: (a) academic leave for professional development activities; (b) unpaid leave for temporary service in other academic institutions, governmental organizations, business entities, fellowship programs, or for personal reasons; and (c) medical leave. Requests for leave are made by letter to the provost through the department chairperson and academic dean. The following paragraphs pertain to the first type of leave - academic leave.

2. Academic leave of absence from the university is a valuable means of providing faculty with an opportunity for study, research, travel, writing, professional reeducation, and other professional development activities - in short, for self-improvement that will be beneficial to the university.

3. A faculty member who desires a leave should request the leave with reasons in a letter to the department chairperson. The chairperson is expected to seek the advice of departmental faculty members in considering the request. Other administrative personnel normally involved in the decision-making process include (center director, if relevant), the academic dean, (vice provost for research, if relevant), provost, president, and the board of trustees.

4. Each application will be evaluated for potential improvement that will be beneficial to the university, as stated in paragraph 2; appropriateness of timing with respect to other leaves taken by the individual and with respect to leaves being requested by other faculty in the same department; and special needs of the department, college, and university. An academic leave will be granted only where satisfactory arrangements are made to carry on the essential work of the department. Sincere efforts will be made at each level involved in the decision-making process to work out such arrangements.



5. An academic leave for any full-time faculty member, whether supported fully on the teaching budget or partially on the teaching budget and partially on research, is normally for one semester at full salary, or one academic year at half salary, with fringe benefits being fully paid in either case. Adjustments in salary may be made depending on the amount of outside support available for the leave - the intent being that total financial support during the leave should be on a "no loss/no gain" basis to the faculty member. Under exceptional circumstances an academic leave may be extended for an additional year, usually without salary.

6. Each faculty member returning from academic leave will furnish, through the chairperson and academic dean, to the provost a written report of accomplishments while on leave.

POLICY GUIDELINES

Section 2.4 of R&P does not address the time frame in which faculty members are eligible to apply for a leave. For the purpose of this policy it is helpful to distinguish between three categories of leave, all of which are consistent with the R&P guidelines above:

- **TYPE I:** Leaves Supported Entirely by University Funds

This type of leave is generally referred to as a sabbatical leave, “normally for one semester at full salary, or one academic year at half salary, with fringe benefits being fully paid in either case.”

- **TYPE II:** Leaves Supported Entirely by External Funds
- **TYPE III:** Leaves Supported Partially by External Funds and Partially by University Funds

The opportunity for this type of leave arises when a faculty member becomes eligible for financial support, outside the scope of a normal sabbatical leave, for professional development activities, where this support is *less* than what would be required to provide the faculty member’s *full semester or academic year salary plus the applicable employee benefits rate*.¹ Guggenheim, National Endowment for the Arts, and National Endowments for the Humanities awards are examples of this type of funding opportunity.

In all cases, approval of this type of leave will be contingent upon documentation that the professional development activities will benefit both the faculty member and the university to a degree that is commensurate with the university support being requested. The logistical calculations for combining external funding and university support for this category of leave should be submitted by the faculty member, with an accompanying letter of support by their department chair, to the college dean, who will then make a recommendation to the provost. These calculations must take into account employee benefits as well as academic year salary, together with the contribution from external funding sources. The request must also document fully what, if any, commitments the faculty member will continue to make during the period of leave in the areas of teaching, service and directing or mentoring undergraduate and/or graduate students.

¹ Faculty members should consult with Human Resources to determine this rate.



TIMING GUIDELINES

Faculty members normally may apply every seven years to be granted a fully university-funded academic leave (Type I) using the application process described in R&P Section 2.4. In instances where a faculty member's research program will clearly benefit substantially by the ability to take a second Type I leave sooner than seven years from the time of the previous one, such as a recently promoted Associate Professor who had taken a pre-tenure leave within the past seven-year period, the faculty member may apply for such a leave with the understanding that their next leave will be requested no sooner than 14 years subsequent to the initial one. Only under exceptional circumstances may a faculty member apply for more than two university-funded academic leaves (Type I) within a 14-year period. The faculty member must submit a formal request for a leave to their chair and dean, minimally one year before the leave would begin.

Faculty members may apply before seven years have expired since their previous leave for a second academic leave that is supported partially or totally through research grants and/or externally funded sources (Type II and Type III above). Partially or totally externally funded leaves may comprise no more than a single two-year period or a series of one-semester-per-academic-year leaves over a three-consecutive-year period. In either of these cases, individual leaves must be requested and approved on a one-year basis and then renewed subject to the purpose and benefit of the leave being clearly documented in the renewal request.

A faculty member requesting a fully or partially university supported leave sooner than seven years since their previous leave should discuss with their department chair and college dean the implication of this leave being approved on the time until which they will be eligible to apply for another university fully funded leave. The agreed upon outcome of this discussion should be included in the written proposal for the currently requested leave. In all cases the provost must approve the request.

In formulating their recommendations in support of a faculty member's request for a partially or fully funded (by Lehigh) leave, the department chair and dean shall consider the substance of the letter submitted to the provost following the faculty member's most recent academic leave, in cases where this is not the faculty member's first academic leave, describing the activities engaged in and the accomplishments achieved during that leave. A faculty member may wish to include as an update in their request for a university funded leave those outcomes (e.g. papers published, grants funded as a result of proposals submitted, new academic programs initiated and/or courses developed) of the activities undertaken during previous leaves that were not yet realized at the time that they submitted a post-leave summary letter to the provost.

Faculty members are required to spend at least one semester in residence at Lehigh after completing any type of academic leave fully or partially funded by the university.

Copies of the *Faculty Academic Leave Application Checklist* and *Leave Accommodation Form for Faculty* are available at the end of this document, as well as on the provost's website.

MEDICAL LEAVES

The above guidelines apply to academic and extramural service leaves and not to medical leaves.



EXIT LEAVES THAT ARE PART OF A RETIREMENT AGREEMENT

The above guidelines apply to academic and extramural service leaves and not to exit leaves that comprise part of a faculty member's retirement agreement. Faculty members may request an exit leave as part of a retirement agreement if their last academic leave supported by university funds occurred more than 6 regular semesters prior to their proposed exit leave semester. Exit leaves are normally for one semester at full pay. Beginning on July 1, 2024, two-semester exit leaves at half pay will only be granted if there is extraordinary justification based on how such a leave is in the interest of Lehigh. Faculty should take this into account when determining the timing of their retirement.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS DURING ACADEMIC LEAVES

Faculty members on academic leave continue to have access to all benefits available to them when working on campus. The terms and conditions for participating in the plans generally do not change.

There are three important exceptions:

Short Term Disability Benefits: A faculty member who becomes ill while on a leave of absence is not eligible for short-term disability benefits until they are scheduled to return to work.

Retirement Plan Contributions: Contributions made to the retirement plan are based on the actual eligible compensation paid to the faculty member by Lehigh. This means that receiving a reduced salary from Lehigh will result in proportionally reduced retirement plan contributions.

Retirement Agreement Exit Leaves: Disability benefits do not continue during this type of leave.



Lehigh University Provost Office Faculty Academic Leave Application Checklist

- A = Candidate
B = Department chair
C = College dean
D = Provost's office

Procedure to be followed

Sequence:

_____ A. 1. Faculty member requests leave of absence in writing to department Chair, including a synopsis of research and teaching activity since their last academic leave, together with a current CV. Requests are due to the Provost's Office by November 1 for the following academic year. The request should include the following:

- a. explanation and justification of proposed academic leave
- b. date and duration of proposed leave
- c. date of last academic leave
- d. copy of the letter submitted to Provost following the faculty member's most recent academic leave (unless this is the faculty member's first academic leave), describing the activities engaged in and the accomplishments achieved during that leave
- e. financial particulars: Academic leaves are typically either for one semester at full salary and benefits or a full year at half salary and full benefits; the request should specify which option the faculty member prefers. Please specify any sources of external funding. Faculty members typically do not receive stipends (caps) for administrative responsibilities during an academic leave; any proposed exception to the rule must be properly justified and with approval from the dean.

If the faculty member would like to be considered for the competitive full-year [University Sabbatical Fellows](#) program, they should also attach a 1-2 page narrative that includes (a) a compelling case that a full year of leave will substantively elevate their research activity or profile over what would be possible with the standard half-year leave and (b) a list of (planned) external applications for sabbatical support. Candidates should show evidence of actively seeking external sabbatical support, as available by discipline (e.g., Fulbright, Guggenheim, Sage Foundation, etc.).

_____ B. 2. Chairperson forwards faculty member's request, together with supporting materials, and their own recommendation in writing to Dean. The Chair's recommendation must evaluate the faculty request and include plans for coverage of the faculty member's teaching and service commitments during the proposed leave. The Leave Accommodation Form for Faculty may be used for this purpose if this proves helpful.

If the faculty member applied for the full-year University Sabbatical Fellows program, the Chair's letter should include a separate recommendation as to whether a full-year leave is likely to make a substantive difference to their research activity and/or impact.



_____ C. 3. Dean forwards faculty request, together with supporting materials and department chair's recommendation, with Dean's own written recommendation to the Provost's office for approval. The Dean's recommendation must include plans for coverage of any administrative commitments of the faculty member, if applicable, during the proposed leave.

If the faculty member applied for the full-year University Sabbatical Fellows program, the Dean's letter should include a separate recommendation as to whether a full-year leave is likely to make a substantive difference to their research activity and/or impact.

_____ D. 4. The Provost, if in agreement, issues official leave letter to faculty member.

Applications for the University Sabbatical Fellows program will be evaluated by a committee convened by the Office of the Vice Provost for Research.



Leave Accommodation Form for Faculty

1. Name of faculty member: _____
2. Faculty rank: _____
3. Department(s) and program(s) affected: _____

	DEPARTMENT ACCOMMODATION
Teaching: list individual courses, labs, studios, etc.	
Supervision: of graduate and/or undergraduate students	
Advising: Major(s) and non-major(s)	
Service: list individual committee membership(s)	
Other	

Faculty member's signature: _____

Department chair's signature: _____