SPECIAL UNPAID LEAVE PROCEDURE

1.0 Purpose

1.1 In certain cases, University of Limerick employees may be granted special unpaid leave. The purpose of this document is to outline circumstances in which special unpaid leave may be sought and considered for approval.

2.0 Scope

2.1 This procedure applies to all employees with 12 months service in the University.

3.0 Procedure Details

3.1 Special unpaid leave is unpaid leave that may be granted for a minimum period of one week and up to a maximum period of four weeks.

3.2 If special unpaid leave is granted, the employee's post will be unaffected for the duration of the approved leave.

3.3 It will not be possible for the employee to return prior to the date that was originally agreed as part of the special unpaid leave approval received, unless by mutual agreement between the employee and their line manager.

4.0 Organisational Needs

4.1 The operation of the procedure should not adversely affect costs or operating requirements of the University. The relevant Head of Department/School or Line Manager will determine such requirements.

4.2 Where there are a number of applications from a particular work area it may be necessary to limit the number of employees availing of the procedure from that area. The approval of applications may also be determined on the business and operational needs of that specific area.

4.3 Employees who avail of special unpaid leave will have their annual leave entitlement calculated in accordance with the provisions of the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997.

4.4 It is not possible to avail of sick leave during the periods of special unpaid leave.

4.5 It is the responsibility of the employee availing of special unpaid leave to make necessary arrangements to ensure that any voluntary contributions (e.g., health insurance, savings plans, AVCs, etc) normally deducted from salary continue to be paid.

4.6 Under current PRSI rules, an employee availing of special unpaid leave is not earning during the period of leave and is not therefore making PRSI contributions. It is the responsibility of the employee to establish with the Department of Social Protection the effect that unpaid leave may have on any entitlement to social insurance benefits.

5.0 Recruitment and Selection

5.1 Employees availing of special unpaid leave will continue to be eligible to apply for posts within the University, subject to the usual eligibility criteria. An offer of a new post during the period of special unpaid leave, in certain circumstances, may be conditional on the employee resuming duty in the new post on its required starting date.

6.0 Non-Reckonability in terms of Pensions

6.1 Members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme – Post Jan 2013 entrants: This is an unpaid approved absence. Your membership of the Scheme is suspended until you return to work and you do not build up benefits in that period.

6.2 Members of Pre Jan 2013 Pension Schemes: the accrual of pensionable service is stopped and resumes when the member returns from the break.

7.0 Application for Special Unpaid Leave and the Right to Appeal

7.1 Employees wishing to avail of this special unpaid leave should apply to their manager using the employee request portal.

7.2 Employees who are refused special unpaid leave shall be given an explanation for the refusal. The staff member may seek a review of the decision not to be awarded Special Unpaid Leave within 10 working days of being notified of the decision. The review request must be made in writing to the Executive Dean / Divisional Director. The person conducting the review will make a decision within 10 working days and this decision will be final.

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