



# UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK

OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

## **Policy & Procedures for Professional Development Leave for Support Staff**

*Approved by Governing Authority 22 May 2012*

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The University of Limerick's (UL) mission is to be internationally renowned as a distinctive university, which shapes the future through educating and empowering people to meet the real challenges of tomorrow. The pursuit of excellence in administration and support services is core to the UL mission.
- 1.2 UL has a clear objective of encouraging support staff to avail of professional development opportunities in pursuit of service and administration excellence. The purpose of this policy is to give members of support staff a period of uninterrupted time to invest in their professional development. Support staff members may apply to take unpaid professional leave at any stage of their career (i.e. career break) subject to line manager approval.
- 1.3 Professional development leave is a period of released time from normal job responsibilities to pursue a project, international benchmarking or activities that will significantly enhance the support staff member's job performance and contributions to the University of Limerick.

## **2. Eligibility**

- 2.1 Support staff must be employed full-time for at least six (6) years in order to qualify for professional development leave.
- 2.2 In exceptional circumstances applications that do not meet the above timelines will be considered on individual merit and will be subject to approval by the relevant Dean/Division Director/Vice-president and HR Director.

## **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Remuneration during a professional development leave varies depending on the substitution arrangements (see appendix 1).

## **4. Period of Leave**

- 4.1 Professional development leave may be approved for up to twelve (12) months and must last for a minimum of six (6) months.

## **5. Reasons for Leave**

- 5.1 Professional development leave may be taken to undertake a project, international benchmarking or activity that will enhance the support staff member's professional expertise, acquire new skills and improve job performance. It may not be used to complete academic degrees or related programmes.

## **6. Application Process**

- 6.1 To apply for a professional development leave, a support staff member must write a proposal requesting the leave and submit it to his or her line manager. The proposal should include:
- Purpose of the professional development leave. The purpose must be acceptable to the line manager and Dean/Division Director/Vice-President
  - Proposed start and end dates
  - The expected outcome(s) of the project or activity
  - Reporting obligations: Upon return to work from leave, the support staff member must provide a written report to his/her line manager and Dean/Division Director/Vice-President and must present a feedback session to his/her colleagues in the Faculty/Division;
  - Financial arrangements must be agreed in advance between the applicant, line manager, Dean/Division Director/Vice-President and Finance Division;
  - Expected benefits of the professional development leave to the support staff member (position), department, division, and University.
- 6.2 Upon returning from professional development leave, the member of support staff must return to his/her post in UL. In general, the support staff member cannot retire or leave UL immediately following the period of leave. Unless otherwise agreed between UL and the support staff member, the support staff member will return to the same position and on the same terms and conditions that applied prior to going on leave.
- 6.3 The Human Resources Manager is available for advice and consultation on proposals.

## **7. Approval Process**

- 7.1 If the line manager approves the proposal, he/she should forward it to the Finance Division for confirmation of the financial arrangements. At any time, revisions may be discussed with the applicant. Once it is approved by the line manager and Finance Division, the proposal is forwarded to the appropriate Dean/Division Director/Vice-President for his/her approval.
- 7.2 Once the request is approved by the Dean/Division Director/Vice-President, the application will be forwarded to HR for processing and an approval letter will issue from HR highlighting any specific conditions attaching to the leave.
- 7.3 A request for professional development leave may be denied if the absence will result in the staff member's responsibilities not being adequately covered, will diminish the quality of faculty/department/division services, or if the outcome(s) or benefit(s) to

the faculty, department, division or institution do not balance the loss created by the absence.

## **8. After the Leave**

- 8.1 After the leave is completed, the support staff member must submit a comprehensive written report to his/her line manager and must present a feedback session to his/her colleagues in the Faculty/Division. The support staff member is obligated to remain with the institution at least one full year following the leave.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Cost of Substitution**

The difference between the support staff member's salary and the cost of their substitution will be paid to the support staff member while on professional development leave. Salary paid will be subject to pro-rata deductions i.e. income tax, PRSI, pension contributions, etc.

### **Example**

This example is based on the support staff member taking one (1) year professional development leave.

The support staff member earns €50,000 gross. The cost to substitute the support staff member is €25,000 gross.

Then it is possible to pay the support staff member a salary of €25,000 gross while on professional development leave.

# University of Limerick

## Professional Development Leave Application form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Division: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Appointment to University of Limerick: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Professional Leave - Start: \_\_\_\_\_ End:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Outline the purpose of the professional development leave (planned project, international benchmarking or activities, etc.)**

**In consultation with your line manager, outline the relationship between the planned activity and the strategic service priorities of the department/division.**

**Outline the tangible outcomes of the professional development leave to you, the department, the faculty, the division and the university. (The professional merits of the planned activities should be clear.)**

**Outline the implications of your absence for service and administrative duties:**

**Venue/base during professional leave:**

**This Page to be Completed by the line manager**

**Comments on the proposed professional development leave:**

**Details of arrangements necessary to cover service and administrative duties:**

**Cost of cover/financial arrangements:**

**I confirm the information above is accurate and I agree to produce a written report and presentation detailing the outcomes of the professional development leave to the line manager/Dean/Division Director/Vice-president on my return. I am not aware of any conflict of interest that might arise between my full-time appointment with UL and my professional activities while on professional development leave.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Support Staff Member)

*I recommend approval of professional development leave.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Line Manager)

*I recommend approval of professional development leave.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Dean/Division Director/Vice-president)

*I confirm the financial arrangements are in order and recommend approval of professional development leave.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Finance Division)

*Approved:*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(HR Division)

***Form must be sent to HR for processing***