

## **Sabbatical Leave Regulations and Operational Guidelines**

*(Paper prepared and submitted to the Deans/DIPO meeting on 27 September 2016 for the information of Deans and DIPO)*

### **Background**

In July 1992, a set of regulations governing Sabbatical Leave was discussed and endorsed by the University Administrative Committee. These guidelines were then presented to the Standing Committee of the University Council on 10 September 1993 for endorsement. The Council approved Sabbatical Leave regulations were announced in a Personnel Circular No. 4/94 in April 1994. The regulations approved since then remain unchanged. Additional operational guidelines have been established since then by the University administration. The Council approved Sabbatical Leave regulations are posted in the HR website in this link <https://www.ab.ust.hk/hro/AdminDoc/leave/regular/sabbatical/sabbatical.html>.

The purpose of this paper is to recapitulate the salient features of the regulations approved by the Council in 1993 and the subsequent operational guidelines established and issued since then for Deans and DIPO to bring to the attention of DHs and faculty for compliance and follow up as appropriate

### **Salient Features of the Sabbatical Leave Regulations approved in 1993**

1. Sabbatical leave with *full pay* may be granted to *eligible academic appointees* for purposes of *academic research, scholarly pursuits and professional development* so that they will continue to give a high standard of service to the University upon return from leave.
2. Sabbatical leave is not an appointee's contractual right and is subject to approval by the University on application. In considering each application, the needs and priorities of the University shall prevail.
3. The granting of sabbatical leave shall be subject to sound justification, the University's regulations and *such other terms as the University may determine from time to time*.
4. Eligibility for Application - In addition to having completed at least 24 months of sabbatical credit-earning service, an appointee must also have completed the first contract term of service with the University to be eligible for the granting of sabbatical leave; if an appointee is still serving on an initial contract term at the time of application, he/she must have been offered re-appointment by the University and accepted such re-appointment.
5. Accumulation of Sabbatical Credit - Sabbatical leave shall continue to be earned at the rate of 1/6 of a period of sabbatical credit-earning service up to a maximum of 12 months. Under the revised regulations, sabbatical credit may not be carried forward beyond a period of sabbatical leave taken except where an appointee is specifically required by the University to divide a sabbatical leave into more than one period. IN other words, the sabbatical credit account of an appointee on return from sabbatical leave will start from a zero basis. In any circumstances, the length of the sabbatical leave to be granted shall be at the absolute discretion of the University irrespective of the sabbatical credits accumulated.

6. Post-Leave Service - Under the revised regulations, an appointee shall be required to render post-leave on-campus service at the end of a period of sabbatical leave at the rate of two months of service for each month of sabbatical leave taken.
7. Earnings Received During Sabbatical Leave - An appointee taking up paid activities during a period of full-pay sabbatical leave over the University's permissible limit of consulting by academic staff shall be required to contribute the relevant earnings to the University subject to deduction of essential expenditure as determined by the University.

#### Operational guidelines issued since 1993

Enclosed in **Appendix I** is a summary of the guidelines by topic, and **Appendix II** is a recapitulation of the guidelines listed by the date of issue. Both are attached for ease of reference.

There are also School guidelines established in each School internally (e.g. Engineering Circle meeting on 30 August 1999; SBM's guidelines discussed and shared at the DH meeting on 8 Feb 2012). Please ask your School Administrator to include them in this document for completeness and if possible for sharing with other Schools on the good practices.

A list of faculty members who have taken leave after January 2007 has been compiled for your School which will be shared with you individually for follow up as appropriate if these faculty members apply for the sabbatical again. The list includes 24 SSCI, 45 SENG, 34 SBM, 34 SHSS and 1 IPO faculty members who have taken sabbatical leave after January 2007 and are in post (as of September 2016). For first-time applications, please also ensure that there is an agreed teaching make up plan. For all sabbatical applications, please ensure that the guidelines in the original 1993 Council approved paper and the subsequent operational guidelines issued since then and as recapitulated in the Appendix are followed.

### Sabbatical Leave Regulations and Operational Guidelines

Operational guidelines issued since 1993 (recapped by topic)

	Topic	Date
1.	<p><b><u>General – application, planned activities, principles on granting the leave</u></b></p> <p><b>Proposal</b> The proposal of sabbatical leave should include a plan from the applicant on where and what he/she will be doing during the sabbatical.</p> <p><b>Information on planned activities</b> Besides a description of the planned activities and the expected achievements, the application should include information on the <i>schedule</i> of planned activities during the sabbatical. These items are the <i>host(s), dates, period, and contact address of each place</i> where the applicant will be visiting. If firm details are not available at the time of application, a tentative schedule should be included. Also, <i>supporting documents</i>, such as a contract to write a book or invitation letters or email communications showing the plan of the visits, should be attached with the application.</p> <p><b>Submission of application 6 months in advance</b> The rationale for this requirement is to allow the University sufficient lead time to cover the teaching duty of the faculty on sabbatical leave. In most of the cases where this requirement was not complied with, the Dean/Head gave the explanation that the applicant had been in discussion with his/her plan of sabbatical for quite some time before the actual date of the application, and the Department had no problem in covering the teaching duty. Should this be the case, the applicant should include such an explanation in the application and the Head should confirm this in his/her recommendation. In other circumstances, the applicant, the Head and the Dean should justify in the application and recommendation for the shorter advance period.</p> <p><b>Changes to the planned activities</b> If there are minor changes to the planned activities, the Department Head should be informed of the changes immediately. However, if the changes are major ones, such as a change in the place of visit or nature of the activities, prior approval should be obtained from the approving authority through the Department Head and Dean. This is a current</p>	<p>26 October 1993</p> <p>20 April 1999</p>

	Topic	Date
	<p>requirement as stated in section 4 of the approved memo sent to applicants.</p> <p>If a faculty member has changed the plan of the activities (as approved in his application) without obtaining prior approval, the faculty may face the possibility of either having his leave curtailed immediately or a record to be entered in his file for reference on his future sabbatical leave applications.</p> <p><b>Discussion of Sabbatical Leave Records at the Deans' meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be some consistency in processing these applications. For junior faculty especially those not yet substantiated, exposure and visibility are needed for this group and since service would not be lost too much thus granting them sabbatical should be fine.</li> <li>• For senior faculty members, since we are now in a tighter budget situation, if they go away for six months or longer which would be quite an investment by the University.</li> <li>• Sabbatical activities should be something compelling and must be with a justifiable plan for professional development and with benefits to the University.</li> <li>• There is a reasonable expectation of faculty that they could go on sabbatical after being in service for a certain period. This entitlement mentality should be removed.</li> <li>• Applications from faculty members who have taken the leave before shall be considered on individual merits but in any case there must be a concrete plan for compelling activities with justifications.</li> </ul> <p><b>General principles of granting sabbatical leave</b></p> <p>Faculty members should be reminded not to view sabbatical leave as an entitlement. The principle of granting sabbatical leave for purposes of academic research, scholarly pursuits and professional development needed to be upheld. To take advantage of the leave, faculty members would be expected to visit or be affiliated with external institutions(s) to refresh themselves with the new developments in their research areas or new teaching techniques/programs. Each department/division should devise a plan on the number and duration of faculty members taking sabbatical leave at any given time. Depending on the faculty size of individual departments/divisions, there should be no more than two to three faculty members going on leave in any semester. Faculty members would be required to make up for their teaching duties either before or after their sabbatical leave.</p>	<p>25 February 2003</p> <p>30 January 2007</p>



	Topic	Date
	<p><b>Overall assignment</b> The Dean, in recommending an application, should give due consideration to the overall teaching assignments/research programs of the department and the school so that during a given period of time, there should not be too many faculty members going on sabbatical within the same department and the school.</p> <p><b>Make up teaching</b> If a faculty member goes away for two semesters, he or she <b>must</b> fulfill teaching duties <i>before</i> leave. This needs advance planning by the Head.</p> <p>Faculty members <b>would be required</b> to make up for their teaching duties and this could be fulfilled either <i>before or after</i> their sabbatical leave.</p> <p>EVPPPO brought to the attention of School Deans and DIPO that some recent sabbatical leave applications did not follow the make-up teaching requirements agreed and issued in January 2007. To ensure that this guideline is followed, Department/Division Heads are required to, in recommending a sabbatical leave application, provide evidence that a faculty member, who took sabbatical leave after January 2007, had already fulfilled the make-up teaching assignments for his/her last sabbatical leave before a new sabbatical leave can be recommended to the School and University level for endorsement. Otherwise, the faculty's sabbatical leave application will not be entertained.</p>	<p>26 February 2003</p> <p>30 January 2007 27 February 2007</p> <p>July 2016</p>
3.	<p><b><u>Sabbatical leave report</u></b></p> <p>To provide feedback on the accomplishments of faculty members taken the sabbatical leave, a <b>requirement for the faculty to submit a report within 3 months upon resumption of duty</b> is added as (4) under the Notes on page 1 of the Sabbatical Application Form and mentioned under (1) in Part I, page 1 of the Application Form.</p> <p><b>Report on sabbatical leave activities</b> The returning faculty is required to submit a report within three months after return from leave. Please do not take this lightly as the report serves the important function of accountability.</p> <p>To include information on income and expenses in the sabbatical report.</p>	<p>14 November 1995</p> <p>20 April 1999</p> <p>25 April 2000</p>
4.	<p><b><u>Salary arrangement for academic administrators</u></b></p> <p>Salary arrangement for academic administrators taking sabbatical leave upon retreat to the academic position in the Department (ref. paper attached).</p>	<p>13 August 2004</p>

**Sabbatical Leave Regulations and Operational Guidelines**

Operational guidelines issued since 1993 (recapped by date of issue)

<p><u>26 October 1993</u> (discussed and agreed at the Deans meeting and issued in a memo from PVC-AA)</p>	<p><b>Proposal.</b> The proposal of sabbatical leave should include a plan from the applicant on where and what he/she will be doing during the sabbatical.</p> <p><b>Cover duties.</b> The Department Head should, in his/her recommendation, provide a plan describing who/how to take care of the job left behind by the faculty on sabbatical.</p> <p><b>Overall assignment.</b> The Dean, in recommending an application, should give due consideration to the overall teaching assignments/research programs of the department and the school so that during a given period of time, there should not be too many faculty members going on sabbatical within the same department and the school.</p>
<p><u>14 November 1995</u></p>	<p>To provide feedback on the accomplishments of faculty members taken the sabbatical leave, a <b>requirement for the faculty to submit a report within 3 months upon resumption of duty</b> is added as (4) under the Notes on page 1 of the Sabbatical Application Form and mentioned under (1) in Part I, page 1 of the Application Form.</p>
<p><u>20 April 1999</u> (Guidance Notes on the Application of Sabbatical Leave issued in a memo from AVPAA(PG))</p>	<p><b>Information on planned activities</b></p> <p>Besides a description of the planned activities and the expected achievements, the application should include information on the <i>schedule</i> of planned activities during the sabbatical. These items are the <i>host(s), dates, period, and contact address of each place</i> where the applicant will be visiting. If firm details are not available at the time of application, a tentative schedule should be included. Also, <i>supporting documents</i>, such as a contract to write a book or invitation letters or email communications showing the plan of the visits, should be attached with the application.</p> <p><b>Submission of application 6 months in advance</b></p> <p>The rationale for this requirement is to allow the University sufficient lead time to cover the teaching duty of the faculty on sabbatical leave. In most of the cases where this requirement was not complied with, the Dean/Head gave the explanation that the applicant had been in discussion with his/her plan of sabbatical for quite some time before the actual date of the application, and the Department had no problem in covering the teaching duty. Should this be the case, the applicant should include such an explanation in the application and the Head should confirm this in his/her recommendation. In other</p>

	<p>circumstances, the applicant, the Head and the Dean should justify in the application and recommendation for the shorter advance period.</p> <p><b>Changes to the planned activities</b></p> <p>If there are minor changes to the planned activities, the Department Head should be informed of the changes immediately. However, if the changes are major ones, such as a change in the place of visit or nature of the activities, prior approval should be obtained from the approving authority through the Department Head and Dean. This is a current requirement as stated in section 4 of the approved memo sent to applicants.</p> <p>If a faculty member has changed the plan of the activities (as approved in his application) without obtaining prior approval, the faculty may face the possibility of either having his leave curtailed immediately or a record to be entered in his file for reference on his future sabbatical leave applications.</p> <p><b>Report on sabbatical leave activities</b></p> <p>The returning faculty is required to submit a report within three months after return from leave. Please do not take this lightly as the report serves the important function of accountability.</p>
<p><u>25 April 2000</u> (issued in a memo form AVPAA(PG))</p>	<p>To include information on income and expenses in the sabbatical report.</p>
<p><u>25 February 2003</u> (discussion of sabbatical leave at the Deans meeting)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be some consistency in processing these applications. For junior faculty especially those not yet substantiated, exposure and visibility are needed for this group and since service would not be lost too much thus granting them sabbatical should be fine.</li> <li>• For senior faculty members, since we are now in a tighter budget situation, if they go away for six months or longer which would be quite an investment by the University.</li> <li>• Sabbatical activities should be something compelling and must be with a justifiable plan for professional development and with benefits to the University.</li> <li>• There is a reasonable expectation of faculty that they could go on sabbatical after being in service for a certain period. This entitlement mentality should be removed.</li> <li>• If a faculty member goes away for two semesters, he or she must fulfill teaching duties before leave. This needs advance planning by the Head.</li> <li>• Applications from faculty members who have taken the leave before shall be considered on individual merits but in any case there must be a concrete plan for compelling activities with justifications.</li> </ul>



<p><u>13 August 2004</u> (discussed at the Deans meeting)</p>	<p>Salary arrangement for academic administrators taking sabbatical leave upon retreat to the academic position in the Department (ref. paper attached)</p>
<p><u>30 January 2007</u> (discussed at the Deans meeting)</p>	<p>General principles of granting sabbatical leave</p> <p>Faculty members should be reminded not to view sabbatical leave as an entitlement. The principle of granting sabbatical leave for purposes of academic research, scholarly pursuits and professional development needed to be upheld. To take advantage of the leave, faculty members would be expected to visit or be affiliated with external institutions(s) to refresh themselves with the new developments in their research areas or new teaching techniques/programs. Each department/division should devise a plan on the number and duration of faculty members taking sabbatical leave at any given time. Depending on the faculty size of individual departments/divisions, there should be no more than two to three faculty members going on leave in any semester. Faculty members would be required to make up for their teaching duties either before or after their sabbatical leave.</p>
<p><u>22 February 2007</u> (issued in a memo from Ag VPAA)</p>	<p>It is noted that faculty members generally perceive sabbatical leave as their entitlement, and many of them have applied for the leave without a thorough or any concrete plan for the activities that they would like to engage during the leave. Faculty members should be reminded that sabbatical leave is NOT an entitlement. The leave is for faculty members to enrich their academic research/teaching, scholarly pursuits and professional development. Activities such as finishing on-going research projects, the writing of text books, paying short visits to overseas collaborators or working with collaborators coming to HKUST, do not generally meet with the enrichment objective.</p> <p>Some guidelines, as discussed, are delineated for the Deans to discuss with Heads in the consideration of whether a sabbatical leave application should be recommended/granted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) there should be a department plan on faculty members taking sabbatical leave;</li> <li>(b) there should be no more than say 1 or 2 (depending on the size of the department) faculty members going on leave in the same academic term;</li> <li>(c) sabbatical leave is not an entitlement; it is for the enrichment of the faculty – the sabbatical activities proposed by the faculty have to fulfil this objective;</li> <li>(d) the faculty member taking the leave could make up his/her normal teaching duties before or after the leave.</li> </ul>

<p><u>28 February 2007</u> (issued in a memo from Ag VPAA to SBM)</p>	<p>The discussion of the sabbatical leave guidelines, as unequivocally agreed at the Deans’ meeting, was for the issue to be brought up for Deans and Heads to remind faculty members that sabbatical leave is not an entitlement and that the principle of granting the leave is for faculty members to enrich their regular HKUST academic research/teaching, scholarly pursuits and professional development, and not just for working with collaborators and finishing an on-going research project.</p> <p>Normally, it is expected that enrichment in professional development will be achieved from experience of an external attachment. Working with collaborators and finishing an on-going research project are important for faculty development but they do not generally fulfil the enrichment objective. This is emphasized so that faculty members can take into consideration when they are planning their sabbatical activities. In exceptional individual cases, if a faculty member is able to make a case to demonstrate that his/her on-campus sabbatical activities, without any external attachment, are able to achieve the objective of the professional enrichment, cases like this can be considered individually based on the exceptional justifications.</p>
<p><u>10 June 2007</u> (email from VPAA to DENG)</p>	<p>We should not have rules against colleagues going to Mainland universities for their sabbatical. Even the hint of it would not be the right reason to reject sabbatical. Having said that, if the sabbatical would not add value to one’s career, we should not approve it, even for 3 months.</p>
<p><u>July 2016</u> (email to schools)</p>	<p>EVPPPO brought to the attention of School Deans and DIPO that some recent sabbatical leave applications did not follow the make-up teaching requirements agreed and issued in January 2007. To ensure that this guideline is followed, DH in recommending a sabbatical leave application is required to provide evidence that a faculty member, who took sabbatical leave after January 2007, had already fulfilled the make-up teaching assignments for the last sabbatical leave before a new sabbatical leave can be recommended to the School and University level for endorsement. Otherwise, the faculty’s sabbatical leave application will not be entertained.</p>

## **Salary arrangement for academic administrators taking sabbatical leave upon retreat to the academic position in the Department**

### Background

1. According to the current practice of the University, when a faculty member has been appointed an academic administrative position, such as Vice-President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs (AVPAA) and Dean, his or her salary during the administrative appointment will be charged to the University's central account while the faculty budget for his or her academic appointment shall remain on the relevant departmental account for the purpose of making temporary or nonsubstantive academic appointments to supplement the department's teaching and research needs as appropriate.
2. When these academic administrators step down from the administrative appointment, they will retreat to their relevant home Department and their salary costs will be charged back to the Department's faculty budget (presumably by ceasing the hiring of temporary supplements).
3. However, it is noted that in most circumstances, the academic administrators on retreat to the academic position will take a period of sabbatical leave before resuming normal departmental academic duties. The Department will have to take up the salary costs for these faculty members during their sabbatical leave. The purpose of this paper is to propose an arrangement for the salary charging, which applies to VPAA, AVPAA and Dean who take sabbatical leave on retreat to their home Department.

### Proposal

4. It is proposed that in the circumstance where the VPAA, AVPAA or Dean takes sabbatical leave on retreat to the academic position, the AA Office will contribute, from its faculty budget, to the relevant home Department a portion of the faculty member's salary during his/her sabbatical leave, based on the portion of the sabbatical credit that the faculty member has earned during the administrative appointment. The amount of this contribution is calculated as follows:

(Period of the faculty member's administrative appointment) *divided by* (Period from the end of the last sabbatical leave\* to the day prior to the commencement of the sabbatical leave after retreat) *multiplied by* (Faculty member's salary) *multiplied by* (Period of the sabbatical leave)

*\*If the faculty member on retreat has never taken any sabbatical leave before, the period will start from his academic appointment in the Department.*

5. The above arrangement will also apply in the circumstance where the substantive administrator is not in post and a faculty member is appointed as the acting VPAA, Acting AVPAA, or Acting Dean for a continuous substantial period of six months or longer, and takes sabbatical leave subsequent to the completion of the acting appointment.

### Examples

- (A) Professor A who joined the University on 1 July 1997 as Professor. He was appointed Dean on 1 September 1998 for two terms until 31 August 2004. He retreats to his academic position in the Department on 1 September 2004. He has not taken any sabbatical leave during his employment at the University, and is now approved to take a 12-month sabbatical leave commencing immediately on his retreat to the Department. In this regard, the AA Office will contribute, from its faculty budget, to the Department a portion of Professor A's salary during the period of his sabbatical leave, calculated as follows: .

$72 \text{ months}^{(1)} \text{ (i.e. 6 years } \times 12) / 86 \text{ months}^{(2)} \text{ (i.e. 7 years } \times 12 + 2 \text{ months)} \times \text{ Salary of Professor A } \times 12 \text{ months (i.e. period of the sabbatical leave)}$

(1) 72 months = period of Professor A's administrative appointment (i.e. from 1 September 1998 to 31 August 2004)

(2) 86 months = period from Professor A's academic appointment in the Department to the day prior to the commencement of his sabbatical leave (i.e. from 1 July 1997 to 31 August 2004)

- (B) Professor B who joined the University also on 1 July 1997 as Professor. He took 6 months' sabbatical leave from 1 July 2000 to 31 December 2000, and was appointed Dean on 1 July 2001. He retreated to the Department on 1 September 2004. On retreat, he is approved to take a 6-month sabbatical leave from 1 January 2005 to 30 June 2005. In this case, the AA Office will contribute, from its faculty budget, to the Department a portion of Professor B's salary during the period of his sabbatical leave, calculated as follows:

$38 \text{ months}^{(1)} \text{ (i.e. 3 years } \times 12 + 2 \text{ months)} / 48 \text{ months}^{(2)} \text{ (i.e. 4 years } \times 12) \times \text{ Salary of Professor B } \times 6 \text{ months (i.e. period of the sabbatical leave)}$

(1) 38 months = period of Professor B's administrative appointment (i.e. from 1 July 2001 to 31 August 2004)

(2) 48 months = period from end of Professor B's last sabbatical leave to the day prior to the commencement of his second sabbatical leave (i.e. from 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2004)

### Discussion

6. This proposal has been discussed at the Deans' meeting on 13 August 2004. It is adopted with the addition of the condition as stated in paragraph 5 above.

Academic Affairs Office  
September 2004