

Research and Study Leave Policy



Responsibility for policy: Director of People and Capability

Approving authority: Vice-Chancellor

Last reviewed: November 2021

Next review: November 2026

Application

1. This policy applies to academic staff of the University of Waikato who are eligible under the terms of their employment agreement to apply for research and study leave.

Purpose

2. The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework within which decisions about research and study leave are made, and the associated rights and responsibilities of staff and the University.

Relevant documents

3. The following documents set out further information relevant to this policy:
 - [Academic Plan](#)
 - [Academic Workloads Guidelines](#)
 - [Annual Leave Management Policy](#)
 - [Financial Ethics Policy](#)
 - [PCard Policy](#)
 - [Staff Code of Conduct](#)
 - [Travel Policy](#)
 - University of Waikato Collective and Individual Employment Agreements

Definitions

4. In this policy,

research and study leave means a period of leave to allow academic staff to undertake research and academic activities which

 - are aligned with the University's Vision and strategic goals, and
 - are of a kind or to an extent that cannot be pursued during the course of normal employment, and
 - enable staff to fulfil one or more of the following key objectives:
 - develop and enhance knowledge, research, teaching and professional capabilities that support high quality outcomes
 - foster connections with colleagues, academic institutions, businesses, governmental and other organisations both internationally and within New Zealand (research and study leave normally, but not exclusively, includes time spent at another University or research institution or other relevant organisation overseas).

research and study leave credit means the amount of research and study leave which a staff member may apply to take, credited on the basis of qualifying service.

qualifying service means continuing service at the University of Waikato in an academic position which allows the staff member to accumulate research and study leave credit.

Principles

5. The University recognises that a well-managed system of research and study leave provides a mechanism for contributing directly to the University's Vision, by enabling the development of excellence, distinctiveness and international connectedness in teaching and research.
6. The value of research and study leave is measured by its usefulness to the University's programme of teaching and research, the individual's professional development, and the strategic objectives of the University.
7. Research and study leave is a form of service to the University with associated obligations and accountabilities; it is extended to academic staff to enable them to undertake agreed academic activities and fulfil particular objectives over a specific period.
8. Research and study leave is neither a right nor an entitlement; approval is at the discretion of the University.
9. Staff on research and study leave receive their salary and some allowances.
10. Effective planning for research and study leave is essential, so that the teaching, learning, research activities and leadership responsibilities of the University are not disrupted by individual research and study leave plans.
11. The following principles underpin the process by which research and study leave applications are considered:
 - the teaching needs of the University are of paramount importance;
 - the provision of equitable access to research and study leave;
 - colleagues should not suffer an unreasonable burden as a result of a staff member's leave; in practice, this means that a staff member is expected to carry an extra teaching load before and after taking leave, and must carry out any assessment and examination duties before taking leave;
 - any contractual or other relevant research obligations must be met;
 - doctoral supervision responsibilities should be retained; where not feasible to do so alternative supervision arrangements must be made
 - leadership responsibilities should be retained; where not feasible to do so alternative leadership arrangements must be made
 - staff members are required to return from leave in good time to prepare for resumption of their regular duties.
12. Academic staff are expected to pursue the purposes for which the leave was granted conscientiously, effectively and in good faith.

Qualifying service for research and study leave credit

13. Qualifying service generates research and study leave credit which is recorded by the Director of People and Capability; the Director of People and Capability has authority to determine a staff member's research and study leave credit.
14. Parental leave counts as qualifying service.
15. The following do not count as qualifying service:

- periods of time spent on research and study leave (subject to clause 46 of this policy, qualifying service will resume on the date of return to regular duties after a period of research and study leave)
- periods of leave without pay over and above four weeks
- periods of exchange leave
- previous service at other institutions, unless agreed otherwise at appointment as provided under clauses 20 to 21 of this policy.

Rates of accruing research and study leave credit

16. Staff at the grades of professor, associate professor, senior lecturer, senior research fellow, lecturer, and research fellow, and any other staff approved for this purpose by the Vice-Chancellor, accrue research and study leave credit at the rate of 8 weeks' leave for each year of service and pro rata for lesser periods, up to a maximum of 48 weeks.
17. Staff at the grade of assistant lecturer accrue research and study leave credit at the rate of four weeks' leave for each year of service and pro rata for lesser periods, up to a maximum of 16 weeks.
18. Part-time staff accrue research and study leave credit at the same rate as full-time staff; however, when the leave is taken, the salary is paid to part-time staff on the relevant pro-rata basis.
19. At the discretion of the University, limited research and study leave credit may be given in respect of previous service at the University in a relevant fixed term role of at least two years' duration.

Previous service at other universities

20. Previous service at another New Zealand university at the grade of lecturer or above may be counted towards research and study leave credit at the University of Waikato at the rate of four weeks' leave for each year of service, and pro rata for lesser periods, up to a maximum of 16 weeks' leave, provided that
 - research and study leave has not already been taken at the other university in respect of that service
 - application to count the previous service is made at the time of appointment to the University of Waikato, accompanied by all records and information required by the Director of People and Capability.
21. Consideration may be given to counting previous service at an overseas university towards research and study leave credit at the University of Waikato, up to a maximum of 16 weeks, provided that
 - research and study leave has not already been taken at the other university in respect of that service
 - application to count the previous service is made at the time of appointment to the University of Waikato, accompanied by full details of:
 - the applicant's previous research and study leave credit,
 - the normal provisions for research and study leave that apply at the overseas university,
 - reasons why the research and study leave has not been taken, and
 - any other information required by the Director of People and Capability.

22. The Director of People and Capability will consult with the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor in determining what, if any, research and study leave credit is to be counted in respect of applications made under clauses 20 and 21 of this policy.

Research and study leave credit is non-transferable

23. Research and study leave credit may not be converted into annual leave or redeemed for payment of any kind.

Eligibility to apply for research and study leave

24. A member of staff is not eligible to apply for research and study leave until they have completed two years in a continuing academic role at the University of Waikato; the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor may allow a staff member to apply for leave earlier but only in exceptional circumstances.
25. Staff are eligible to apply for research and study leave up to the maximum of their research and study leave credit.
26. Study leave may be taken in short blocks, e.g. four to eight weeks, as well as for more extended periods up to 48 weeks, depending on study leave credit.
27. Research and study leave credit does not, of itself, give the staff member an entitlement to take research and study leave.

Maximum periods of research and study leave

28. Any absence from the University for more than four weeks in order to undertake activities that comply with the definition of research and study leave in clause 4 of this policy, must be treated and recorded as research and study leave.
29. The maximum period of research and study leave in one continuous period is 48 weeks; a staff member who takes 48 weeks of research and study leave may not take more than four weeks of annual leave consecutively with the research and study leave.
30. The minimum period required to be worked at the University between periods of research and study leave is subject to the discretion of the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Approval of research and study leave applications

31. Authority to approve research and study leave applications rests with the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
32. Each Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor has authority to determine the approval processes and criteria for research and study leave in their Division or equivalent provided that they are consistent with this policy.
33. An application for research and study leave must be submitted on the University's Research and [Study Leave Application Form](#) to the relevant Head of School or equivalent for consideration in the first instance; the Head of School or equivalent will make a recommendation to the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor with respect to the approval (or otherwise) of the research and study leave application.
34. In considering an application for research and study leave, the relevant Head of School or equivalent and Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor will take account of the overall purpose of research and study leave and also:

- the staff member's research and study leave credit
 - rigorous evaluation of the staff member's delivery of agreed outcomes during any previous research and study leave
 - whether equitable and satisfactory arrangements can be made by Divisions or equivalent, and the University generally, for maintaining teaching, research (including externally funded research contracts), student research supervision and administrative functions during the proposed absence of the staff member
 - whether the research and study leave objectives will enable the staff member to extend significantly their capabilities in teaching and research, and/or any other specific responsibilities outlined in their employment agreement
 - whether the research and study leave objectives will deliver outcomes that will assist the University in meeting relevant quality standards and targets (e.g. the Performance-Based Research Fund)
 - any other specific criteria defined within the Division or equivalent concerned
 - the overall plan for leave, teaching, research and workload arrangements for the Division or equivalent over the period concerned.
35. Research and study leave is not intended to be used for the purposes of completing a higher degree and may not be used for that purpose unless agreed by the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor otherwise for that particular Division or equivalent.

Research and study leave administration

36. The relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor will inform the applicant of their decision in writing; if the research and study leave is approved, the Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor will specify any terms, including dates of absence and reporting deadlines.
37. Where research and study leave has been approved, the Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor will send a copy of their decision to the Director of People and Capability who will
- record the approved leave and adjust the staff member's research and study leave credit balance accordingly
 - calculate the allowances for which the staff member is eligible (refer [Appendix 1](#)), and
 - advise the staff member in writing of the applicable allowances.
38. A staff member who wishes to make changes to a research and study leave plan after it has been approved must notify the relevant Head of School or equivalent and Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the earliest possible opportunity; such changes are subject to the approval of the Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor, in consultation with the Head of School or equivalent.

Review of declined applications

39. A staff member whose application for research and study leave is declined by the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor may seek a review of the decision.
40. Requests for review must be made in writing to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research.

41. Authority to review the decision of a Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor with respect to an application for research and study leave rests with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, who will consult the Director of People and Capability, the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the staff member before making a decision; where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research considers that an application should be declined, or approved only subject to certain conditions, they will discuss the matter with the staff member concerned and take their comments into consideration before making a final decision.
42. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research will advise the staff member, relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and the Director of People and Capability in writing of their decision.

Accountability for leave

43. Academic staff are accountable to the University for the fulfilment of approved research study leave objectives.
44. Within two months of return to regular duties, the staff member must provide a report to the relevant Head of School or equivalent on the University's Research and [Study Leave Report Form](#); the report must include details of the extent to which the proposed outcomes listed in the approved research and study leave application have been achieved.
45. Research and study leave reports will be assessed on the basis of the extent to which the outcomes listed in the approved research and study leave application have been achieved.
46. A Head of School or equivalent may discuss a research and study leave report with a staff member and propose changes before it is referred to the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor for decision.
47. The Head of School or equivalent will make a recommendation to the Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor with respect to the approval (or otherwise) of the research and study leave report.
48. Where the Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor has not received a research and study leave report which they have assessed to be satisfactory within four months of the staff member's return to regular duties, qualifying service will then cease and not recommence until a satisfactory report has been received.
49. Subject to clauses 50-51 of this policy, authority to approve research and study leave reports rests with the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
50. Where the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor approves a research and study leave report, they will provide a copy of the report and decision to the staff member, the Head of School or equivalent, the Director of People and Capability and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research.
51. Where the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor is of the view that a research and study leave report is unsatisfactory, or satisfactory only subject to certain conditions, they will provide a copy of the report and decision to the staff member, the Head of School or equivalent, the Director of People and Capability and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research.
52. Authority to make decisions with respect to research and study leave reports referred to them under clause 51 of this policy rests with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, who will consult with the Director of People and Capability,

the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the staff member before making a decision; where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research considers that a research and study leave report should be declined, or approved only subject to certain conditions, they will discuss the matter with the staff member concerned and take the staff member's comments into consideration before making a final decision.

53. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research will advise the staff member, relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and the Director of People and Capability in writing of their decision.
54. Where the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research decides, under clause 52 of this policy, to decline a research and study leave report, or only approve it subject to certain conditions, the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor has authority to:
 - decline approval of any future research and study leave applications by the staff member concerned, and/or
 - take any other action they consider appropriate to address the matter.
55. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research will provide to the Academic Board annually a high-level report on research and study leave activities, outcomes and impacts for the previous year.

Management of research and study leave plans

56. Divisional teaching plans that take account of all teaching, research supervision, contractual and administrative obligations for each School or equivalent should include research and study leave plans.

Research and study leave allowances

57. The University recognises that staff members incur substantial costs in taking research and study leave and contributes to these costs through research and study leave allowances that may be paid to a staff member in addition to their normal salary for the agreed period of research and study leave; the formula for calculating allowances is set out in [Appendix 1](#).
58. Staff are responsible for making their own arrangements for travel insurance, and may use part of their allowances to cover the cost; the University will not meet the cost of travel insurance separately. (Details of discounted travel insurance rates are included in [Appendix 1](#).)
59. The Director of People and Capability will calculate research and study leave allowances commensurate with the approved travel plans and within the limits defined in [Appendix 1](#), and advise the staff member accordingly.
60. Approved research and study leave allowances may be paid to the staff member in advance, but not more than six months before departure.
61. For tax and audit compliance purposes, research and study leave allowances may be used for actual and reasonable expenses only and must be supported by receipts and/or invoices; the staff member must submit to the Director of People and Capability a costs and expenditure return in respect of the research and study leave allowance within two months of completing the research and study leave. (See also clause 69 of this policy.)

Provision for the University to require salaries and allowances to be repaid

62. Salary and allowances for research and study leave are paid by the University to a staff member in good faith on the basis that the research and study leave programme will be undertaken as agreed between the staff member and the University.
63. A member of staff who does not return to duties at the University at the end of a period of research and study leave, or who resigns or (other than for medical reasons) retires from the University with effect from a date within 16 weeks of the agreed date of return, will be required to refund the University both salary and expense allowances in respect of that period of leave.
64. A staff member who resigns or (other than for medical reasons) retires from the University with effect more than 16 weeks after the agreed date of return from research and study leave, but before the completion of one year of further service, will be required to refund a proportion of the expense allowances paid in respect of that period of leave; the amount to be refunded will be determined by the Director of People and Capability.
65. A staff member who retires from the University within two years following the end of a period of research and study leave will not be eligible for a retirement gratuity. This provision may be waived in exceptional circumstances.

Other financial assistance

66. Applicants for research and study leave are required to declare on the application form any expected financial or other assistance relating to the period of leave, either from within the University or from external sources; this declaration may be taken into account by the University in determining the amount of research and study leave allowance to be paid to the staff member.
67. Staff are encouraged to use their Research Trust funds to augment the standard allowances.
68. In recognition that financial or other assistance from sources external to the University may facilitate and enhance research and study leave, the University encourages applicants to seek and accept external assistance, provided that it does not unduly constrain or impede the approved research and study leave objectives; for example:
- the assistance should not be conditional on significant time being taken in activities not central to the purposes for which leave is granted
 - the assistance should not impose constraints on rights to publish freely the results of research undertaken while on leave.
69. Within two months of their return from research and study leave, staff must declare all actual financial and other assistance received during the research and study leave period, either from within the University or from external sources; this declaration must be made in conjunction with the costs and expenditure return required under clause 61 of this policy.
70. With reference to actual and reasonable expenses incurred by the staff member in a period of research and study leave, the Director of People and Capability, after consultation with the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor, has authority to adjust the research and study leave allowances payable by the University in respect of any other internal or external financial assistance from

University research accounts or from any other internal or external sources declared under clause 69 of this policy.

Authority to vary or waive the provisions of this policy

71. Only the Vice-Chancellor has the authority to vary or waive the provisions of this policy in individual cases.

Breaches

72. The Director of People and Capability is responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy and reporting any breaches to the Vice-Chancellor.

73. Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action under the [Staff Code of Conduct](#).

Appendix 1

Research and Study Leave Allowances

These allowances apply to both full-time and part-time staff.

Location of leave	Available allowances	Maximum
New Zealand and/or Oceania (Australia and Pacific Islands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$300 per week for each complete week spent in New Zealand and/or Oceania (maximum 48 weeks), plus• A lump sum of up to \$2,000 for staff taking leave within New Zealand and/or Oceania for a period of at least 3 weeks	\$14,400 +\$2,000 \$16,400
Beyond Oceania	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$350 per week for each complete week spent overseas beyond New Zealand and/or Oceania (maximum 48 weeks), plus• A lump sum of \$4,000 for staff taking leave beyond New Zealand and/or Oceania for a period of at least 3 weeks.	\$16,800 +\$4,000 \$20,800

OVERALL LIMITS

1. In any six year period, the maximum allowance payable is \$20,800 (calculated on the basis that all of the research and study leave is spent 'Beyond Oceania').
2. Staff are encouraged to use their Research Trust funds to augment the standard allowances.
3. Regardless of the combination of locations where research and study leave is undertaken, under no circumstances will a lump sum of more than \$4,000 be paid.
4. Staff taking leave in New Zealand and/or Oceania and Beyond Oceania for less than three weeks in either location, but for three weeks or more in total, are eligible for a lump sum payment of \$2,000.

Travel Insurance

Arrangements have been made for the University's travel management company, Orbit Corporate Travel, to make available a discounted rate for travel insurance. Staff can take advantage of this arrangement whether or not airfares relating to their research and study leave are booked through Orbit. The arrangement is entirely voluntary and staff members may choose their own insurance provider if they wish. Staff who do wish to take up the Orbit offer should contact unileisure@orbit.co.nz stating their requirements.