

ADDITIONAL ANNUAL LEAVE PURCHASE SCHEME

Policy

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Policy

1 Introduction

The University is committed to supporting staff wellbeing and to helping staff to achieve an appropriate balance between their work and home life. Whilst the University's annual leave provisions are widely recognised as generous, it is acknowledged that there may be instances when staff wish to take more annual leave than standard for personal reasons.

This Scheme has therefore been devised to provide employees with additional flexibility in respect of planned time off work. The additional annual leave described below will be unpaid, with the cost of it being deducted from an employee's salary over their annual leave year. This will ensure that the employee continues to receive a monthly salary, at a reduced rate to reflect the unpaid leave.

2 Purpose and Scope of Policy

This scheme provides the opportunity for staff to "buy" up to 2 working weeks (pro-rata if appropriate) additional annual leave in each leave year, with deductions in pay being spread over 12 months. It does not apply to other types of leave, such as parental leave, which will continue to apply separately.

Employment would not be broken during the unpaid leave period(s) and continuous service would be maintained.

Approval of any additional annual leave purchase is not guaranteed, and will always be subject to the operational requirements of the University.

Annual leave may be purchased in blocks of five days. The maximum amount of additional annual leave that any employee may 'purchase' during the leave year is 2 working weeks (maximum of 10 days for full-time staff, pro-rata for part-time staff). The minimum amount of additional annual leave that any employee may 'purchase' during the leave year is one working week (i.e. a minimum of 5 days for full-time staff, pro-rata for part-time staff) [Note 1](#)

Once an agreement has been reached on the purchase of additional leave under this scheme, and this is confirmed in writing by HR, this will be deemed to be a permanent contractual change which will apply to every leave year ([Note 2](#)). If an employee wishing to withdraw from an agreement they may do so prior to the commencement of a new annual leave year by giving at least two months' notice i.e. a written notification that the employee wishes to withdraw from an agreement should be made by no later than 31st July for the leave year commencing 1st October. If circumstances change and a Head of Department wishes to end a previously agreed arrangement due to a clear change in local circumstances, then this will be fully discussed with the staff member with any changes back to the standard annual leave entitlement commencing from the start of the next annual leave year. In exceptional circumstances where multiple requests to purchase leave are received by staff in the same area and these cannot all be accommodated, purchase of leave may be agreed on a time limited basis to allow others the opportunity to participate in the future.

Employees who purchase additional leave will continue to make pension contributions based upon the gross amount of pensionable pay they receive; i.e. contributions will be maintained at the original level throughout the year.

3 Approval Process

This scheme applies to all University employees irrespective of whether they are full time, part time, on continuing or fixed term contracts.

An employee who wishes to purchase additional annual leave under this scheme should make a request in writing to their Head of Department.

Requests should be submitted no later than two months before the start of an annual leave year i.e. a written request should be made by no later than 31st July for the leave year commencing 1st October.

If the Head of Department agrees with the employee's request to purchase additional leave, the Head of Department will confirm this to HR, who will write to the employee to confirm the additional leave as a contractual change.

There may be cases where it is not possible to agree an employee's request to purchase additional annual leave. For example: -

- There may be operational deadlines which occur over the summer when the employee hopes to take the additional leave
- Objectives, service standards and deadlines are not likely to be met within the reduced amount of working time
- Granting the additional leave may place undue pressure onto the employee's other team member colleagues or mean that they can't take their own annual leave
- Additional annual leave may already have been granted to another team member/s.

If it is necessary to refuse a request, this will be explained to the individual.

If the additional annual leave is formally agreed, this should be requested and taken in line with the normal annual leave procedures. Managers and staff will need to plan and manage the taking of the additional annual leave when it is agreed; there will be no increase in the normal leave "carry forward" provisions and if, having purchased additional annual leave, the employee fails to take it before the end of the relevant leave year, the leave will be lost and no reimbursement can be made unless exceptional circumstances apply.

4 Overpayment or underpayment of leave

Staff who have purchased additional annual leave and who leave the University without having taken it will be reimbursed if the salary deductions on leaving amount to more than the leave taken. If, on leaving, the value of the salary deductions made during the relevant leave year are less than the value of the leave taken, the University will deduct the outstanding amount from salary or other payment due to the employee. This will be explained to the employee in the formal letter from the HR team which confirms that the additional annual leave has been agreed.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Employees will:-

- Request the additional annual leave, in writing, to their Head of Department at least two months prior to the start of an annual leave year.
- Note that by submitting the request for additional leave, if approved, this will result in a contractual change which will mean a salary adjustment.
- Ensure that they fully consider the financial implications for themselves of the monthly deductions from their salary. To support this, a 'ready reckoner' is available on the Finance Directorate website.
- Ensure proper management of their leave so that all additional annual leave is taken prior to the end of the leave year.
- If they wish to cancel the additional annual leave arrangement, submit notification to their Head of Department and to HR no later than two months before the commencement of a new leave year i.e. by no later than 31st July for the new leave year commencing 1st October.
- Be aware that, once committed to the additional leave, the arrangement can only be cancelled at the start of a new leave year i.e. that it cannot be cancelled 'mid-year'.

5.2 Heads of Department will:-

- Assess the request for purchasing additional annual leave, liaising with their HR team as required, considering the operational feasibility of granting the request; including ensuring that the additional leave can be accommodated within the employee's leave year.
- Treat all applications with due consideration and without reference to personal characteristics of the employee.
- Communicate the decision in writing, normally within 10 working days of receiving the written request.
- When operational concerns about granting additional leave are identified, discuss these with the employee and either decline the request or discuss alternative options, for example agreement of one week's additional leave rather than the two weeks requested.
- Inform the HR team that the employee has asked to purchase additional annual leave and that this request has been granted. This will include forwarding to HR the employee's written request to purchase the additional leave.
- Ensure that the additional annual leave purchased is recorded on the employee's leave record.
- Ensure proper management of the employee's leave so that all additional annual leave is taken prior to the end of the leave year.
- Ensure that, if an employee for whom additional annual leave has been agreed leaves the University's employment during a leave year, a Termination of Employment Form is completed to clearly indicate holidays taken up to the leaving date and any holiday balance to be paid.

5.3 The HR and Finance Directorate payroll team will:-

- On receipt of a written request for additional annual leave and confirmation from the Head of Department that this has been agreed, formally write to the employee asking them to accept a contractual adjustment of additional annual leave and a corresponding reduced monthly salary.
- Adjust the employee's monthly salary downwards to account for the additional leave which has been agreed.
- Ensure that, when an employee for whom additional annual leave has been agreed subsequently determines that they wish this arrangement to end and notifies HR of this at least two months in advance of the commencement of a leave year, the employee's salary is adjusted upwards to reflect this.
- Ensure that, if an employee for whom additional annual leave has been agreed leaves the University's employment during a leave year, any payments due to the employee for untaken leave identified within the Termination of Employment Form is paid or, conversely, if the value of the salary deductions made during the relevant leave year are less than the value of the leave taken, deduct the outstanding amount from salary or other payment due to the employee.

6 Notes:

- Note 1.** For part-time staff/staff who work shifts which are longer than the University's standard 7-hour day, the additional leave should be calculated/pro-rated in hours rather than days.
- Note 2.** Employees who wish additional unpaid leave for a special, one-off event, may request this through their line manager and, if agreed, pay will be deducted in the month in question.