

AC17 – Sabbatical Leave
Frequently Asked Questions

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SABBATICAL LEAVE COMMITTEE

Who should serve on the college committee?

- ▶ The composition of the college review committee is at the discretion of the Dean/Chancellor.

SABBATICAL LEAVES AND ANNUAL EVALUATIONS

Must the annual review (AC40 - Annual Evaluation of Faculty Performance) be completed if a faculty member is on sabbatical?

- ▶ Yes, an annual evaluation of faculty performance is to be completed. As stated in AC40, “this policy provides the process for an evaluation of the performance of each member of the faculty at least once each year.”

Must the extended five-year review (AC40 – Annual Evaluation of Faculty Performance) be completed if a faculty member is on sabbatical?

- ▶ The extended five-year review is postponed by one academic year if the faculty member is on sabbatical leave; however, the faculty member has the right to proceed with the extended review while on sabbatical if so desired.

SABBATICAL LEAVE ELIGIBILITY

According to AC17, how is “contract years” defined?

- ▶ A tenure-line contract year starts July 1 and ends June 30. A full contract year is based on the weeks of service specified in an individual’s offer letter or Memorandum of Personal Service (MPS).

A faculty member previously held a non-tenure-line position before being hired into a tenure-line position. Would any of that time count toward their eligibility for a sabbatical, or do only the years on the tenure line count?

- ▶ Years of service in a non-tenure-line position do not count toward sabbatical eligibility for a faculty member in a tenure-line position.

When are tenure-line faculty eligible for their first sabbatical leave following the probationary period (after being awarded tenure)?

- ▶ Tenure-line faculty members must serve six (6) full-time contract years in a tenure-line position before they can apply for a sabbatical. A faculty member can apply during year seven (7), the first year of their tenure, and if approved, the sabbatical would commence the following contract year, during year eight (8).
- ▶ Below is an example for a faculty member’s first sabbatical after being awarded tenure:

Contract Years	Academic Year	
1	2019-2020	Faculty member hired on the tenure track
2	2020-2021	
3	2021-2022	
4	2022-2023	
5	2023-2024	
6	2024-2025	Faculty member attains tenure
7	2025-2026	Faculty member applies for sabbatical
8	2026-2027	Sabbatical year

If a faculty member has been awarded early tenure, when are they eligible for their first sabbatical leave?

- ▶ Faculty members awarded early tenure are eligible to apply for sabbatical leave during year six (6) with the sabbatical leave to commence in year seven (7) per policy AC17 (Sabbatical Leave).
- ▶ Below is an example of a faculty member who has been awarded early tenure:

Contract Years	Academic Year	
1	2019-2020	Faculty member hired on tenure track
2	2020-2021	
3	2021-2022	
4	2022-2023	Faculty member granted early tenure, contract year four (4)
5	2023-2024	
6	2024-2025	Faculty member applies for sabbatical
7	2025-2026	Sabbatical year

When are faculty members who have gone through the immediate tenure process eligible for their first sabbatical?

- ▶ Faculty members hired with immediate tenure are eligible to apply for a sabbatical leave during year six (6) with the sabbatical leave to commence in year seven (7) per policy AC17 (Sabbatical Leave).
- ▶ Below is an example of a faculty member who has been hired with immediate tenure:

Contract Years	Academic Year	
1	2019-2020	Faculty member hired with immediate tenure
2	2020-2021	
3	2021-2022	
4	2022-2023	
5	2023-2024	
6	2024-2025	Faculty member applies for sabbatical
7	2025-2026	Sabbatical year

Does tenure credit count toward the calculation of sabbatical eligibility?

- ▶ No; per AC17, faculty must complete six (6) years of full-time service on the tenure line. A faculty member can apply for their first sabbatical year in year seven (7) for their sabbatical to commence in year eight (8). If a faculty member received immediate or early tenure, they may apply in year six (6) for their sabbatical to commence in year seven (7).

When would a faculty member be eligible for subsequent sabbatical leaves?

- ▶ A faculty member becomes eligible for subsequent sabbatical leaves after completing at least six (6) contract years of full-time service (the minimum required). Time spent on sabbatical leave, or any unpaid leave, is not counted as one of the required contract years of full-time service.
- ▶ In the example below the first sabbatical year is the 2019-2020 academic year:

Contract Years	Academic Year	
	2019-2020	Sabbatical year
1	2020-2021	Year one (1) toward eligibility
2	2021-2022	Year two (2) toward eligibility
3	2022-2023	Year three (3) toward eligibility
4	2023-2024	Year four (4) toward eligibility
5	2024-2025	Year five (5) toward eligibility
6	2025-2026	Year six (6) toward eligibility; may apply for sabbatical
7	2026-2027	Sabbatical year

Are teaching or clinical faculty members eligible for a sabbatical?

- ▶ The policy does not apply to non-tenure-line teaching or clinical faculty members.

Are non-tenure-line research faculty eligible for a sabbatical?

- ▶ Yes; per AC17, research professors, associate research professors, and assistant research professors must serve the University for a minimum of seven (7) full contract years of full-time service in that position to be eligible.

How does a leave of absence affect the timing of sabbatical eligibility?

- ▶ Time spent on any leave(s) (paid or unpaid), including FMLA leave, totaling more than six months in a single contract year will result in one year of service being deducted from the faculty member's sabbatical clock, extending their date of eligibility for a sabbatical by one year.

If a faculty member was approved for a sabbatical leave in academic year 2020-2021, but delayed that sabbatical to AY 2021-2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, when is that faculty member eligible for a subsequent sabbatical leave?

- ▶ In this scenario the sabbatical eligibility clock will not be affected or reset. The faculty member's eligibility for a subsequent sabbatical will be calculated as if the sabbatical had taken place in 2020-21 and the faculty member will be eligible for a sabbatical in academic year 2027-2028.

Will a faculty member's sabbatical eligibility clock be reset if they delay their approved sabbatical for reasons unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., if their anticipated funding is not awarded)?

- ▶ All changes to approved sabbatical requests unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic that result in the sabbatical taking place in a later academic year will result in the faculty member's eligibility clock being reset. For example, if a faculty member was scheduled to take a sabbatical leave in academic year 2020-2021 but delayed to academic year 2021-2022 for reasons unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic, then the faculty member will be eligible for a subsequent sabbatical in academic year 2028-2029.

If a faculty member takes the Extension to the Probationary Period due to COVID-19, may they apply for sabbatical during their sixth review year, given that it is their seventh year of full-time service?

- ▶ No. Penn State's standard practice is to not allow those in the last year of the probationary period to apply for sabbatical and that practice will be maintained for those faculty who have confirmed extension of the probationary period.

If I want to take a sabbatical during the 2026-27 academic year, when must I apply?

- ▶ Applications must be submitted in the academic year *prior to* the academic year in which the sabbatical is requested to occur. For example, a faculty member requesting a spring semester 2027 (AY2026-27) sabbatical must apply in fall 2025 (AY2025-26).

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES WHILE ON SABBATICAL LEAVE

If a faculty member is on a sabbatical, may the faculty member serve on a promotion and tenure review committee?

- ▶ No; while on sabbatical leave, faculty members may not participate on promotion and tenure review committees. The academic unit should respect the purposes of the leave, including sabbatical leave, and there should be no expectation that faculty on sabbatical leave donate their leave time for department service of any kind. Academic units should carefully consider whether to allow a faculty member on a one-semester sabbatical leave in the spring semester to serve on a promotion and tenure committee that may be called back into service while the faculty member is on sabbatical, as the faculty member would not be able to participate in any discussions, meetings, or votes.

Can a faculty member perform work for the University while on sabbatical?

- ▶ No; a sabbatical is a leave of absence, and faculty should not participate in University-directed work while on a leave. This includes serving as the instructor of record for a course, serving on committees, or serving in administrative roles.

Can a faculty member teach or undertake other pedagogical projects during their sabbatical?

- ▶ While the majority of sabbaticals are related to research or creative activity, a faculty member may propose to undertake pedagogical activities during their sabbatical. A proposal for a pedagogical project in such areas as instructional scholarship, the development of new instructional resources, the acquisition of new techniques, the development of outreach programs, or alternative teaching experiences should show that the activity will have a major impact on education in the subject area. For example, a proposal for the faculty member to teach a course should explain how the faculty member will develop significant new pedagogical approaches or practices. A proposal involving the writing and publication of a textbook should demonstrate that the book will be a substantial addition to any published material currently available.

SABBATICAL LEAVE APPLICATION

*****NEW** Can I take a sabbatical that differs from one or two semesters in length?***

- ▶ Generally speaking, sabbaticals for faculty with 36-week appointments should be either one semester (50% of the appointment period) or two semesters (100% of the appointment period) in length. Requests from faculty with 36-week appointments for sabbaticals that differ from this time period should include a justification for the departure from the typical time period. Faculty members with appointment lengths of other than 36 weeks may propose specific dates for their sabbatical. Sabbaticals must begin on the first day of a month and conclude on the last day of a month.

If a sabbatical is not recommended at the campus/school/college/department/division level, does the application still move forward?

- ▶ Per AC17, only sabbatical applications recommended by the campus, school, college, department or division should be forwarded to the Office of the Provost for further consideration. Thus, if the unit head does not recommend the sabbatical, then the request would not be sent forward for

further review. We advise unit leaders to provide faculty members with feedback about the sabbatical proposal submitted.

Under what circumstances should a faculty member include, in their sabbatical application, letters of invitation from institutions they plan to visit?

- ▶ As noted in the document, [Preparing Sabbatical Leave Applications: A Guide for Faculty](#), if a project requires access to restricted libraries, laboratories, or other facilities, or affiliations with other institutions, then the faculty member should append letters of invitation granting access, space, or support from the relevant authorities. Expectations of academic units vary and some may expect to see such letters in order to substantiate the planned activity even if access is not restricted to substantiate the planned activity; faculty members should consult with their academic unit head to determine whether there is an expectation that such a letter be included.

Can a faculty member take a sabbatical that crosses academic years (e.g., Spring 2023/Fall 2023)?

- ▶ Yes, faculty members are permitted to take a sabbatical that crosses academic years. This practice is not encouraged, however, as eligibility for a subsequent sabbatical is calculated from the academic year in which the sabbatical concludes. For example, if a faculty member takes a spring 2023/fall 2023 sabbatical, then academic year 2023-24 would be used as the year in which the sabbatical concluded when calculating eligibility for the next sabbatical (rather than academic year 2022-2023 when the sabbatical began).

When will a faculty member be notified if their sabbatical application has been approved? Who will notify them?

- ▶ Sabbatical applications are due in the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost no later than November 1. Decisions are to be expected at the beginning of December, dependent upon the number of applications received. An approval memo from the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs will be distributed to approved faculty members by the faculty member's unit executive.

For faculty members with a joint appointment, is the application reviewed by the secondary department/unit? If it is, does a letter of support need to be included from the secondary department?

- ▶ It is recommended that the dean with budgetary responsibility consult with the unit executive of the secondary unit and document that unit's support. A letter from the secondary unit is not required.

COMPENSATION AND AGREEMENTS

If I have a two-semester sabbatical, how will the reduction in salary occur?

- ▶ The salary of faculty members with a 36-week appointment is paid in 12 equal monthly payments, with the understanding that salary paid for July and the first part of August is a pre-payment for services that they will render during the subsequent 36-week academic year, while

salary paid for the middle of May through June is a payment for services already rendered. Therefore, the salary for faculty with a two-semester sabbatical will be reduced to 67% from July 1 through June 30 of the following year to capture the pre-payment salary earned in July and August. Additional summer salary that a faculty member may receive will not be impacted.

Can I receive a salary from another institution while on sabbatical?

- ▶ As stated in ACG15, no faculty member may be on the regular payroll of another organization while on leave, unless the activity is an approved part of the sabbatical program.

How is the percentage of salary during a sabbatical calculated for University Libraries faculty?

- ▶ Because University Libraries faculty members work a full calendar year, their percentage of salary is calculated based on a 52-week appointment (12 months).

May a faculty member undertake a sabbatical in another unit at Penn State?

- ▶ While it is possible for a faculty member to engage in sabbatical activities in another unit at Penn State, in general, faculty are encouraged to explore opportunities for scholarship and research outside of the University, as it is typically not necessary to be placed on leave in order to pursue opportunities at Penn State. Sabbatical activities undertaken within the University must be part of a sabbatical plan approved by the college and must meet the purpose of a sabbatical as outlined in AC17: “To provide a leave of absence with pay for purposes of intensive study or research which has as its outcome increasing the quality of the individual's future contribution to the University.” The receiving unit must be consulted and agree to the sabbatical plan. Faculty members may not teach in another unit of the University during a sabbatical unless the purpose of the teaching is primarily related to intensive study or research, e.g., to study teaching from a scholarly perspective or to develop a new pedagogical technique.

What should I do if I receive an agreement or contract from another institution?

- ▶ If you plan to visit another institution during your sabbatical and that institution requires signed documentation regarding your visit, the University’s expectation is that any agreement requiring a signature will be between the faculty member and the host institution. If the host institution sends you an agreement or contract that discusses the ownership or conveyance of intellectual property rights, or that otherwise requires approval/signature by an authorized representative of the University, the agreement should be forwarded to the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (OVPPFA) at least 90 days in advance of the visit whenever possible. The OVPPFA will work with the appropriate University offices to determine whether such an agreement can be approved.

May a faculty member receive supplemental pay from Penn State while on sabbatical?

- ▶ Generally speaking, faculty may not receive supplemental pay from Penn State during their appointment period while on sabbatical. Requests for a faculty member to receive supplemental pay during a sabbatical must be made by the faculty member’s unit executive (dean/chancellor) to the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. Faculty on a 36-week appointment may receive supplemental pay for summer teaching outside their appointment period as long as their sabbatical work is not taking place concurrently.

CHANGES TO APPROVED SABBATICAL LEAVES

Can a faculty member request to amend their approved sabbatical dates?

- ▶ Yes. The process to revise an approved sabbatical is as follows:
 - The faculty member sends their request to revise/cancel/postpone their sabbatical to the academic unit head (department head/division head/director of academic affairs/school director).
 - The unit head will send the Dean/Chancellor a memo or email stating their approval/support, along with the faculty member's original request.
 - The Dean/Chancellor sends their approval memo along with the unit head's and faculty member's request to the Assistant Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs Abby Diehl (agc105@psu.edu) with a copy to Christine Luzier, Faculty Affairs Administrative Support Coordinator (cal89@psu.edu).
 - The Faculty Affairs office will review and respond to the Dean/Chancellor.
 - If the request is approved, Ms. Luzier will send an updated approval memo and communicate the change to the Absence Management team in Human Resources.

Can a faculty member defer an approved sabbatical to another year?

- ▶ An approved sabbatical may be delayed for one academic year by following the process described above. If another deferral is required, then a new sabbatical application must be submitted.

WORKDAY AND SABBATICAL LEAVES

Why am I showing as "On Leave" in Workday?

- ▶ A sabbatical is a type of paid leave, so the Leave and Absence Management team places a faculty member "On Leave" in Workday. This action also allows for the reduction in salary to be applied for those taking a two-semester sabbatical leave. Once the sabbatical leave concludes, the Leave & Absence Management team will return the faculty member to active status.

RETURNING FROM A SABBATICAL LEAVE

For what period of time do I need to return to Penn State after my sabbatical?

- ▶ Per policy AC17, “Individuals granted sabbatical leaves are required to return for a full contract year of service following the sabbatical leave. Any person who does not return, or does not remain for the full contract year following the sabbatical leave, will be required to refund the amount of salary received from the University during the sabbatical leave.” If a faculty member takes a sabbatical during the fall semester only, for example, or takes a sabbatical during spring semester of one academic year and fall semester of the next academic year, then they must still return for the spring semester plus the next contract year.

If I accept a position at another institution in the academic year following a sabbatical leave, will Penn State waive the requirement that I must refund the salary received from the University while on sabbatical?

- ▶ As specified in AC17, “Individuals granted sabbatical leaves are required to return for a full contract year of service following the sabbatical leave.” Persons who do not return or remain for the full contract year will be required to remit to the University the amount equivalent to the salary they received from the University during the sabbatical leave. Penn State’s standard practice is to not make exceptions to this policy.

What happens if I return for six (6) months following my sabbatical leave rather than a full year? Will the salary to be refunded be prorated to reflect the six (6) months I returned to my position?

- ▶ As specified in AC17, “There will be no proration of the amount to be returned if the employee remains for any fraction less than the full contract year.”

A faculty member was awarded a fellowship while on a two-semester sabbatical. The fellowship is set to commence six (6) months after the faculty member returns from sabbatical leave. Will the faculty member have to pay back the salary received while on sabbatical leave since they are not returning for a full year?

- ▶ The answer depends on the nature of the fellowship and its potential impact on the faculty member’s contribution and commitment to the University. The faculty member may request postponement of the remaining return-to-service commitment until after the fellowship concludes. Before approving such a request, the dean should consult with the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. Approval of a postponement request must be made in writing to the faculty member and confirm the remaining return-to-service time commitment. If the faculty member does not return for the remaining months of service owed to the University following the fellowship, the faculty member will be required to repay salary owed as noted in policy AC17.

How do I know if I must complete an Arrest and Conviction Self-Disclosure form before returning from my sabbatical?

- ▶ As stated in policies HR99 (Background Check Process) and AC17 (Sabbatical Leave), “Individuals with a break in service of six (6) months or longer are required to complete a Penn State Arrest and Conviction self-disclosure form before returning to work.” Absence Management facilitates this process and will send the form to the faculty member.

Upon return from sabbatical, to whom should the completed Arrest and Conviction Self-Disclosure form be submitted?

- ▶ The completed forms should be sent to the Absence Management team via email at absence@psu.edu.

Upon return from sabbatical, to whom should the Sabbatical Leave Report be submitted?

- ▶ Faculty members returning from sabbatical should submit their report to their Dean/Chancellor. After review by the Dean/Chancellor, the appropriate office (e.g., dean's office or HR office) should send the report to the employee's personnel file via the Worklion portal as follows:
 - Go to the Worklion portal: www.worklion.psu.edu.
 - Click on "Worklion Employee Portal" (furthest option on the left).
 - Under "Additional Resources" section on the right side of the webpage, select "Ask HR / Submit Inquiry".
 - Under "I have a question about" select "Records Management/Employee Personnel File".
 - Under "Subject (Key Word/Tag)" type "Sabbatical Leave Report".
 - Under "Inquiry Details" please include the name and PSU ID number of the employee.
 - Attach the document to the inquiry with "Add files".
 - Submit the request.