Faculty & Academic Staff Affairs
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

SABBATICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE
REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS: TIP SHEET

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines key policy requirements and expectations regarding sabbatical leaves of absences. Sabbatical leaves provide a leave of absence (with pay) for purposes of intensive study or research to increase future contribution to the University. A sabbatical leave is intended for the mutual benefit of the University and the faculty member granted a leave.

ELIGIBILITY

Faculty members requesting sabbatical must have tenure and have completed six years of consecutive full-time service[1] to be eligible.

DURATION

Sabbatical leave types[2] depend on the appointment basis:

- Academic Year (AY) Appointments: One semester at full pay or two semesters at half pay
- Annual Year (AN) Appointments: Six months with pay or twelve months at half pay

OVERVIEW OF REVIEW PROCESS

A sabbatical is not granted automatically. It is requested by the faculty member and reviewed successively by: (1) the chairperson/school director, (2) the dean, **and** (3) the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs (FASA). Final approval is determined by the Vice Provost for FASA. The Vice Provost for FASA issues a final letter of determination (approved or not approved).

REQUEST PROCESS

Faculty Member - - Six Months Prior to Proposed Leave

1 A faculty member completes the Sabbatical Leave Information Form. The faculty member provides the following information in the form: (a) a detailed description outlining the purpose, objectives, and scholarly and research activities of the leave, (b) dates of the leave, (c) the benefit to the faculty member, and (d) the benefit to the department/school, college, and university. The more detailed the information the better. Faculty may wish to attach additional documents.

2 The faculty member submits the formal request (the Sabbatical Leave Information Form) for a sabbatical leave to the chairperson/school director **six months prior** to the sabbatical start date

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[1] Years of service count from the date of full-time appointment, or from the ending date of the previous sabbatical leave. All leaves of absence are excluded in the count towards years of service.

[2] For purposes of this document, this does not include the sabbatical leaves for administrators who have different leave lengths.

for review. The timeline for requesting a sabbatical leave is crucial. The lead time allows for effective planning in teaching responsibilities, service commitments, etc. in the unit. Additionally, it is critical that the reviewing parties (i.e., chairperson/school director, dean, and the Vice Provost for FASA) have the earliest opportunity to review the request in the event more information is needed, or to resolve any policy or eligibility issues.

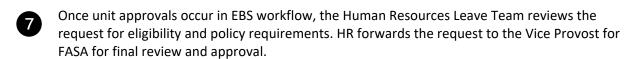## REVIEW PROCESS

Chairperson/School Director and/or Dean

3 The chairperson/school director and dean's office first confirm the individual is eligible to take a sabbatical. Once confirmed, they review the faculty member's request and determine whether to endorse the sabbatical request. A faculty member's past meritorious achievements as reflected in awards, other recognition and merit and market salary adjustments, etc. are relevant to evaluation of the merit of the request, including potential outcomes of a sabbatical leave request.

4 Chairperson/school director and dean's office endorsements must clearly specify the expected benefit of the sabbatical leave outcome for the department/school, college, and university (i.e., the institution's return on investment entailed in a commitment to a sabbatical leave). For instance, how will the proposed objectives and activities of the leave advance the interests and capabilities of the faculty member toward fulfilling the objectives and goals of the department/school, college, or university? This endorsement should be detailed enough to permit review and endorsement by deans and the Vice Provost for FASA.

5 If the sabbatical request is supported by the chairperson/school director and/or dean (or delegated associate dean), the dean's office notifies the appropriate HR administrator to submit the sabbatical leave request for **final approval** by the Vice Provost for FASA as soon as possible.

FINAL APPROVAL PROCESS

HR Administrator - - Four to Six Months Prior to Proposed Leave

6 The HR administrator submits the leave request in EBS. The completed Sabbatical Leave Information Form (with all signatures) is included as an attachment. **Note:** to allow for adequate lead time, the HR administrator should plan to submit the leave request **four to six months** in advance of the proposed leave.

Human Resources

7 Once unit approvals occur in EBS workflow, the Human Resources Leave Team reviews the request for eligibility and policy requirements. HR forwards the request to the Vice Provost for FASA for final review and approval.

Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs

8 The Vice Provost for FASA reviews the sabbatical request, taking into consideration the faculty member's eligibility, and the proposed sabbatical plan along with the chairperson/school director and dean's office statements on the expected benefit to MSU. The Vice Provost may request

additional information from the college. The Vice Provost approves or denies the request, by notifying the HR Leave team, the dean, the chairperson/director, and the faculty member via email and a formal letter.

AFTER THE SABBATICAL LEAVE

Consistent with policy:

9 The faculty member is required to provide the department/school and/or dean with a sabbatical leave report **within thirty days** following the completion of the leave.
The report:
- should include an assessment and evaluation of the experience and impact of the sabbatical, and specifically how it relates to the expectations in the original sabbatical leave request.
- be one-page in length.
- is required to be retained by units. It is not submitted centrally.

10 The faculty member is obligated to return to Michigan State University for the following year.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A sabbatical is not granted automatically.
- A sabbatical is not an entitlement.
- Chairpersons, directors, and deans should inform faculty that each sabbatical request is reviewed and must be approved by the chairperson/director, the dean **and** by the Vice Provost for FASA.
- Sabbatical requests may be denied at any administrative level.

Submit requests early.
- Chairpersons, directors, and/or deans should inform faculty to submit their request for a sabbatical leave of absence at least six months in advance of their anticipated leave date.
- Each college may want to establish internal deadlines.
- Once the Dean's Office has approved, units should not delay in submitting the leave paperwork to HR once the college has approved; Vice Provost approval is still needed.

Provide sufficient detail for review.
- Academic unit and dean's office endorsements in the *Sabbatical Leave Information Form* must state clearly in detail the expected benefit of the sabbatical leave outcome for the department/school, college, and university (i.e., the institution's return on investment entailed in a commitment to a sabbatical leave).

A final report must be submitted.
- Within thirty (30) days of completion of the leave, the faculty member must submit a sabbatical leave report evaluating the experience and impact of the sabbatical.
- This report is submitted to the chairperson/director/dean.
- Each unit ensures compliance with this requirement (e.g., set deadlines).

RESOURCES

- [Sabbatical Leave Policy](#) (Faculty Handbook)
- [Sabbatical Leave Implementation Information](#)
- [Sabbatical Leave Information Form](#)

COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **Who provides the final approval for a sabbatical leave?**
   Final approval of a sabbatical leave lies with the Provost (or the Provost's designee, i.e., the Vice Provost for FASA). The faculty member should wait to make final leave arrangements until final approval from the Vice Provost for FASA is received.

2. **Can we negotiate different eligibility requirements for a sabbatical leave as part of an offer of employment? For instance, can we negotiate that a new faculty member will become eligible for a sabbatical leave after completing 5 years of service instead of the specified 6 years of service?**
   No. The Sabbatical Leave eligibility requirements are non-negotiable.

3. **Can a faculty member's previous time at another institution count towards the six years of service required for eligibility for sabbatical leave?**
   No. The faculty member is required to complete six years of service to the University to be eligible.

4. **Can a faculty member still provide guidance/advising to their students while on sabbatical?**
   Yes. The policy doesn't prohibit this arrangement, although colleges or departments/schools may have specific guidelines. In most cases, the faculty member may plan to continue to advise students during their sabbatical. The faculty member should create a plan of how they intend to advise while on sabbatical (i.e., identifying availability, methods of communication). Specifics of the plan should be communicated by the faculty advisor to the advisees before the faculty member begins their sabbatical leave. For those graduate students who are on research grants from their respective advisor, a faculty member still has to maintain their responsibilities associated with their grants and the personnel funded on those grants. Alternatively, advisees may be temporarily reassigned to another faculty advisor during the faculty advisor's leave of absence. Each chairperson/school director or dean should confirm adequate arrangements are in place to ensure students have appropriate access to their advisor to continue their academic progress.

   The *[MSU Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising](#)* provides guidelines and tools intended to be useful to all within the MSU community who have advising and mentoring roles related to graduate education.

5. **If a faculty member takes a half-year sabbatical leave are they still required to return to MSU for a full year after the sabbatical?**
   Yes. The policy doesn't make a distinction between the length of leave taken. The policy requires the faculty member to return for a full year after sabbatical regardless of the length of the leave.