

Leave Liability Reduction – An Approach

Reducing leave liability with sensitivity to work-life balance issues

This paper outlines an approach which can be taken to reduce current leave liability balanced with proper consideration of work life issues. A secondary aim is to increase cross-university teamwork and collegiality. It will be initially undertaken with UMG members, but can be expected to expand so that teams include other staff such as academics, Heads of School/Units and Deans/Heads of Office. The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Margaret Seares has agreed to Sponsor this initiative to support the implementation of ideas put forward by UMG members.

History

UMG has reviewed the leave liability/work life balance issue in its September meeting and has identified a number of ideas (*see attached notes from UMG meeting held on 20 September*) to address this issue which can be grouped under the following headings:

- Budget and provision of relief
- Culture change issues including
 - Increased flexibility in leave management
 - Increased planning and discussions (formal and informal)
 - Improved management practices including multi-skilling, PDR discussions, mentorship
- Improvement to reporting
- Policy amendments
- Rewards & sanctions

The challenge is now to identify those ideas which are practical and worthy of implementation and to find the capacity to act on these. The ideas fall into 2 broad streams;

- those needing central university action to implement e.g. enhancements to reports (see **Central University – System and Policy changes**)
- those which primarily need action at the local level e.g. cultural change issues (see **Leave Liability and Cultural Change Initiative – UMG**)

Central University – Systems and Policy changes

Those ideas requiring system or policy changes are being given immediate consideration and those ideas judged worthy and practical will be pursued. For example, Clive Patman from Human Resources will attend the 18 October 2007 meeting of UMG to provide an overview of HR upcoming activities in relation to leave management.

Leave Liability and Cultural Change Initiative - UMG:

Following on from UMG's consideration of the leave liability issue, we are using a creative approach to provide the conditions in which your good ideas which encompass cultural change can be implemented. The **aim** of the initiative, which you are invited to participate in, is outlined below:

- Reduce leave liability while maintaining sensitivity to work-life balance
- Encourage ownership of leave management through a team approach at local level with champions (Heads/Deans) leading by example

- Increase cross-university sharing of ideas and enhance collegiality
- Provide you with a reward for successfully completing your chosen objective

Description of Approach

1. Review the data/ideas already generated from last UMG discussion of leave liability and work-life balance.
2. Form a team of your own choosing to work on “Reducing leave liability with sensitivity to work-life balance issues.”
3. Guidelines for team formation
 - Your intended objective must benefit more than one work unit (e.g. 2 or more schools, 2 or more faculties, 2 or more units or sections, etc) so should have representation from the requisite areas
 - Your team will include both school/faculty and central administration representative/s.
 - Where your staff compliment has a mixture of both general and academic staff, you are encouraged to have at least 2 academics in the team.
4. Your team will determine the outcome that you want to achieve within the broad topic area reducing leave liability in concert with work-life balance issues. For example you may decide to ‘Achieve 20% reduction in leave liability in School X and Section Y by August 2008’.
5. Your team will develop the performance indicators by which success will be determined. These will be subject to peer review.
6. Your team will identify the rewards you will receive for successful completion of your objective. These may be individual, team or school/section rewards. They may be monetary, non-monetary or a mix.
7. The performance indicators and the rewards which you identify need to be agreed to by the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor, who may consult with other parties affected.
8. This initiative will launch in February 2008 and conclude in August 2008.

SDVC Professor Seares will describe this initiative to Deans and Heads of Office to enlist their support for any teams working on this initiative in their faculty/office. Participation in this initiative is, of course, optional. However, since it is work that you will need to do anyway (i.e. work on reducing leave liability in your School/Section) this is an opportunity to be sponsored by the SDVC and to be rewarded for successful outcomes.

Timetable

1. Present broad concept to UMG on 18 October 2007, as part of reporting back on leave liability discussions of last meeting.
2. University to initiate those university wide initiatives deemed practical and worthy e.g. enhancements to Alesco reporting and report on progress to UMG from October 2007 to August 2008.
3. Identify working groups from across Schools, Faculties and Administrative areas, performance indicators and rewards by UMG meeting of February 2008.
4. Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor agrees or negotiates performance indicators and rewards identified by each team by February 2008.
5. Initiative runs from February 2008 to August 2008
 - Provision for short monthly reports of progress at UMG (10 minutes per meeting)

- Progress report against agreed performance indicators provided in writing to UMG Executive in July 2008
6. Final review session held August 2008
- Hosted by Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor
 - Report on outcomes
 - Allocation of rewards **if and only if** agreed performance indicators are met
 - Include celebratory lunch with invited guests

This approach provides a fresh way of dealing with a complex and high priority problem. The approach is structured in accordance with sound principles that increase the likelihood of resolution of intractable problems.

Vivienne Blake
October 2007

University Managers Group 20 September 2007

Leave Liability Management

Suggested strategies – the yellow sticker list

Group Suggestions

These notes are the groups suggested strategies to assist leave management:

- Better reporting through ESS.
- Really good reports on leave from Alesco/ESS (into Excel format).
- Improved ESS reporting at school level - enabling reconciliation of leave entitlements and improved planning.
- ESS – improve reporting and functionality.
- True accurate leave liability not gross liability to give an accurate situation.
- All leave booked and managed electronically.
- Addition of recreation leave application form to study leave application form.
- Link leave management to PDR.
- The most valuable issue today was the discussion on academic work leave being distinguished from personal leave.
- Provide incentive to take leave in same year.
- University's buying power to encourage staff to take leave.
- Managers manage the issue with flexibility, determination and a nurturing manner.
- A bonus incentive for staff to take their leave within the year accrued. Cash incentive primarily.
- Travel forms of academics to be with detailed explanation and support documents if no leave is applied.
- Negotiations among work groups to plan for leave at certain times of the year.
- Put onus on academic staff to document work days in a period of conference/travel leave.
- Recognise need for legislative change to enforce staff to take leave.
- Uniprint produce 24 month leave planners to be completed after info session.
- Develop a plan aligning team leaving bookings to workload pressures and peak periods.
- UWA to invest in holiday homes and/or encourage holiday packages via Strategic Procurement.
- The University investing in and making available holiday homes and voucher system reward for taking leave.
- Pay leave at the rate when they are due not when they take it.
- Have enough slop in the system to allow a member to take leave so as not to put undue pressure on the workplace with absenteeism occurs.
- Planning at staff meetings how to handle leave accruals.
- Subsidise the School Manager leave relief position by 50% to encourage use.
- Allow annual leave cash-outs.
- Use the University's procurement to give opportunities to staff to obtain cheaper flights etc.
- Use University's procurement strategy to access cheaper travel. Advertise travel opportunities.
- Declare 24th December as a closed-holiday.

Leave Liability Management Group Discussion Notes

Group Questions

These notes provide a summary of four group discussions in response to the following questions:

1. What factors need to be in place so that staff take leave as it falls due?
2. Identify 3 small but significant ideas which, if adopted, would make a real difference.
3. Identify 3 more complex suggestions which would lead to significant improvements, if adequately researched and resourced.

Group 1

Scribe's name: Therese Sanders

Q1. What factors need to be in place so that staff take leave as it falls due?

- To have a willing and nurturing manager.
- Culture development in the area.
- Willingness to take leave at some stages during the year.
- Adequate leave relief (with authority).
- Thought of what will be there upon return.
- Additional costs for replacement staff.
- No more peaks and troughs, constant stream of peaks.
- Multi-skill staff to cross-fill positions.
- Staff not wanting to take extended leave if nothing to do.
- Financial facilities to take leave on time. (RRR).

Scribe's name: Therese Sanders

Q2. Identify 3 small but significant ideas which is adopted would make a real difference.

- Be flexible with the way the leave is taken
(e.g. 1) taking one day a week
(e.g. 2) allowing staff to take leave in first few months of the following year, but ensure booked in the current year.
- Negotiation among teams for a leave plan.
- Leave plan.
- Have access to leave liability reports online - availability to everyone. Stop expensive production of hard copy.

Scribe's name: Therese Sanders

Q3. Identify 3 more complex suggestions which would lead to significant improvements, if adequately researched and resourced.

- Find funds for provisions to cover cost of leave replacement.
- Change culture for academic staff to distinguish work from holiday.

Group 2

Scribe's name: Maxine Gamble

Q1. What factors need to be in place so that staff take leave as it falls due?

- Funds for leave replacement.
- Skills to replace staff.
- Resources boom means replacement staff not available (need to pay a premium).
- Person going on leave has input into replacement.
- If no replacement available (or no suitable replacement) and individual comes back to a large in-tray (or a mess) discourages them from taking leave at a later date.
- Discouragement factor – Academics being required to bring in 150% of their salary.
- Projects – need to plan for project team to clear leave at end of project (may not be possible for research staff).
- The threats need to be auctioned – otherwise empty threat.
- Senior people need to lead by example.
- More pool staff for leave relief?
- Discouragement factor – secondments.

Scribe's name:

Q2. Identify 3 small but significant ideas which is adopted would make a real difference.

- Academics take opportunity to do a project that is of interest but not required for work.
- Reward good behavior – take your leave, you get a reward (e.g. book vouchers etc).

Scribe's name: Mark David

Q3. Identify 3 more complex suggestions which would lead to significant improvements, if adequately researched and resourced.

- Pay the leave at the rate it is accrued.
- Promote/introduce health conscious culture as per self assessment.
- University holiday homes
 - Local
 - International.
- University coordinated/subsidised holidays.
- Reduced rates (preferred supplier discounts).

Group 3

Scribe's name: Debbie van Dijk

Q1. What factors need to be in place so that staff take leave as it falls due?

- Replacement / enough resources to provide back-up / backup.
- Approval from management.
- Incentive to take leave in same year (e.g. \$500 or concession to travel tickets). Put savings to UWA into the system as an incentive.
- Decentralise leave liability \$ to school faculty level (profit/loss).
- What is UWA real liability in case of a payout?
- 3% leave liability levy on LSL deducted by HR for each employee.
- Travel form for conference attendance should have clear details and require approval by head of school. Ask questions and establish new culture.
- Encourage staff taking accrue leave as a fraction of the week (e.g. ½ day or 1 day a week).
- Build into agreement upfront of fixed term contracts.
- Standard letter (see example) to be generated from ESS to remind staff member/supervisor.
- Penalty.
- Enable staff members to take LSL as you go after you have been working for UWA for X years.

Scribe's name: Debbie von Dijk

Q2. Identify 3 small but significant ideas which is adopted would make a real difference.

- Link leave management plan to PDDR to have discussion with staff member.
- Enforce staff to take annual leave on 24 December.
- Provide incentive to take leave in same year.
- Better reporting through ESS.

Scribe's name: Debbie von Dijk

Q3. Identify 3 more complex suggestions which would lead to significant improvements, if adequately researched and resourced.

- Change legislation – more flexibility to employer to manage staff's leave.
- 3% leave liability to be deducted by HR and returned to BUs.
- Better documentation and protocol for attending conferences.

Group 4

Scribe's name: Christine Richardson

Q1. What factors need to be in place so that staff take leave as it falls due?

- Backup or backfill for senior roles and front counter roles.
- Discussion within the area.
- Allocate a budget to leave relief.
- Culture of leave taking and processes that back it up.
- Inclusion of leave relief in the budget process.
- Need an overarching policy for clearing leave.
- Ensure that internal policies and internal precedence are known. They may cut across preferred management practices.
- Having a conversation with staff about leave (in teaching groups; with supervisor).
- Recognise the "single points of failure" and manage that risk.
- Improved awareness of leave options (very flexible!!) purchased leave etc.

Scribe's name: Jenni Stevenson

Q2. Identify 3 small but significant ideas which is adopted would make a real difference.

- Internal budget allocations to allow for backfill arrangements.
- OR
- Check LSL accruals as part of annual budget process.
- 3 year planning processes, internally enforced, and discussion between supervisors, staff and colleagues.
- Clearing leave one day at a time (as part of a leave clearing plan) can be helpful, particularly for large accruals.
- Requirement for areas supervisors/managers/heads to report regularly on progress in clearing liabilities.
- Easier extraction of reports on leave taken and liabilities to enable better planning at school/work group level.

Scribe's name: Clive Patman

Q3. Identify 3 more complex suggestions which would lead to significant improvements, if adequately researched and resourced.

- Succession planning/career development to overcome "indispensability".
 - Link this to backfill capacity and plan personal development opportunities against leave planning.
- Improved ESS leave reporting with transferability to spreadsheets – enabling reconciliation of systems records/liability.
 - All leave applications to be via ESS.
- Capacity to cash-out Recreation Leave – subject to approval. e.g.: reduce leave to say not less than 4 weeks.