



## **SABBATICAL POLICY (2024)**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Association recognises that many people, at some stage in their working life, wish to take time off work for a number of reasons.

A sabbatical which may also be referred to as a career break, is when an employee is guaranteed re-employment with the Association at the end of the break, provided that they have adhered to the terms and conditions of the agreement. The job the staff member returns to will be of equal status but there is no guarantee of returning to the same post.

### **2.0 ELIGIBILITY**

To be eligible for a Sabbatical an employee must:

- ✓ Have completed at least 2 years continuous service;
- ✓ Have a satisfactory performance record in line with the Association's policy;
- ✓ Have a satisfactory attendance record in line with the Association's policy;
- ✓ Indicate a firm intention to return to work;
- ✓ Have no live disciplinary warning.

Each case will be considered on its own merits in light of personal circumstances and the businesses operational needs. The commencement and time allowed for each career break will be dictated by the needs of the business.

### **3.0 LENGTH OF CAREER BREAK**

A sabbatical is available for a minimum of 3 months to a maximum of 12 months. An employee can take a maximum of 2 sabbaticals. If an employee wishes to apply for a second sabbatical, they must have a further 2 years continuous service from the first break.

### **4.0 APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

An application for a sabbatical must be made to the Chief Executive at least 3 months before the requested start date of the sabbatical. The employee should complete a Sabbatical Form which is attached to this policy. Should the application be made by the Chief Executive this must be made to the Chairperson.

Confirmation of acceptance or non-acceptance will be made in writing, to the staff member, within 30 days of the application.

## 5.0 EFFECTS ON TERMS & CONDITION OF EMPLOYMENT

Employees should be made aware of the following effect on their terms and conditions of employment;

- ✓ **General** - During the leave of absence employees will have no entitlement to payment of salary, holiday or sick leave or any other mandatory benefits.
- ✓ **Pension Scheme** – Employer pension contributions will be suspended for the duration of the leave and the period will therefore not count towards the pensionable service. Upon return from the employee's leave they will be entitled to make good all contributions to the Association's Pension Scheme omitted during the leave of absence within a period if agreed by the Scheme Trustees. The employer will not however invoke contributions for that period. All employees proposing to take a sabbatical must ensure that they clarify their entitlements including death benefits, for the proposed period of leave with the Pension Scheme administrators - it should be noted that entitlements may be different, depending on which scheme the employee is a member of.
- ✓ **Professional Membership Fees** - During the period of unpaid leave of absence, the Association will not pay any professional subscriptions in respect of membership of professional bodies.
- ✓ **Redundancy** - If redundancy should occur during a Sabbatical, the employee will be contacted, in writing, and the appropriate process will be used under the Association's redundancy procedure.
- ✓ **Increments** – Staff returning from sabbatical will not be entitled to an incremental increase unless they have been back at work for 6 months prior to 1<sup>st</sup> April. Staff, will however, be eligible to receive the Association's cost of living rise in place at the time of their return to work.
- ✓ **Failure to return to work** - will be treated as a resignation.
- ✓ **Statutory / Contractual Benefits** - The period of the sabbatical will not count towards calculating any statutory or contractual benefits.
- ✓ **Communication of Changes** - If the Association makes any changes to the employee's post/grade/salary or any other conditions during the sabbatical break, they will write to the employee informing them of any changes.
- ✓ **Staff Code of Conduct** – for the avoidance of doubt the Staff Code of Conduct continues to apply for the duration of any sabbatical career break.

## 6.0 MAINTAINING CONTACT

Where possible regular contact should be maintained with the Association throughout the break. The frequency and method of contact will be agreed between the employee and their departmental manager.

A monthly information pack containing any circulars, newsletters and other relevant material will be sent to any employee on a sabbatical by their line manager. Any relevant information will be sent to the employee's home address.

## **7.0 ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT**

The period of unpaid leave of absence is granted on the understanding that the employee will not take up any paid work during this period. If they should do so then they will automatically lose their right to return to work unless previous approval is granted by the Chief Executive (or Chairperson) and confirmed in writing.

## **8.0 POSTPONING THE DATE OF RETURN**

### ✓ By the Association

If there are no suitable vacancies the Association may postpone the date of return for up to 28 days. The employee will be informed of the revised date in writing. If the Association postpones the date of return, the employee will not be paid any salary or other benefits during the postponement. However, the period of postponement will count towards the continuous service.

### ✓ By the employee on Medical Grounds

The date of return may be postponed by the employee on medical grounds only. The maximum period of postponement allowed is 28 days. If an employee is unable to return to work after this period the Association may review the right to return to work. The employee will not be paid any salary or other benefits during the postponement but the period of delay will count towards continuous service.

## **9.0 RETURNING TO WORK**

An employee must give 3 months notice in writing, to the Chief Executive (or Chairperson) of their intention to return to work. Failure to do that will be treated as a resignation.

If a member of staff fails to return to work after their sabbatical they will lose their right to return to work. The Association will assume that the employee has resigned from their post which will be effective from the end of their sabbatical.

When the employee returns to work their departmental manager will conduct a return to work interview and cover areas such as changes within the Association, salary and holiday entitlement.

The Association reserves the right to alter or withdraw the scheme at any time.

## **10.0 REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed at least every 5 years.

George Tainsh  
Chief Executive

April 2019

Policy Review Consultation Process

Considered by SMT	23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2024
Reviewed by HSEHR Committee	2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2024
<b>APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ON</b>	<b>30<sup>th</sup> May 2024</b>
<b>Date of Next Review</b>	<b>May 2029</b>

Approved

