

System-wide Policy: HR0335 - Educational Leave	
Version: 12	Effective Date: 10/01/2017

HR0335 – Educational Leave

Topics:

Educational Leave of Absence with Pay	Procedures
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Objective:

To provide time off to regular university employees to continue their education and/or participate in research, grants, or fellowships.

Policy:

1. Educational leave for regular university employees must be requested in writing and approved in advance by the chief administrator and the chief human resources officer of the employee's campus or institute. Such approval must specify the length of the leave which normally should not exceed two years. Each request for leave will be evaluated on its own merits and university approval will depend upon the evidence.
2. Any approved leave extending beyond the current fiscal year is subject to budgetary constraints or funding availability or both.

Educational Leave of Absence with Pay

3. Eligibility for benefits during an education leave of absence with pay is described in [HR0355 - Leave of Absence](#) except as noted below.
 - a. **Retirement.** Refer to the **Retirement Credit** section for information and procedures to request retirement credit.
 - b. **Payment of Fees.** Employees on educational leave with pay continue to be eligible for University of Tennessee fee waivers under [HR0330 - Educational Assistance \(Fee Waiver\)](#). If a faculty or staff development grant

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includes funds to pay fees at other higher education institutions, the campus or institute may choose to pay the grantee the lump sum rather than prorating the funds as part of the monthly stipend. To do this, the granting campus or institute is responsible for providing an approved [FORM T-27, REQUEST FOR SPECIAL PAYMENT](#) when submitting the grant contract for approval. The request for special payment may be for the full amount of fees included in the grant, or, if the grant includes fees for several quarters or semesters, a separate request may be submitted as needed provided that a copy of the fully executed contract is supplied with each request. Deductions for federal income taxes and social security will not be made from special payments. However, the total amount of the fee payments will be reported on the grantee's year-end earnings statement (W-2) as taxable income.

Educational Leave of Absence without Pay

4. Except for retirement credit noted below, eligibility for benefits during an educational leave without pay is described in [POLICY HR0355, LEAVE OF ABSENCE](#).

Retirement Credit

5. An [APPLICATION FOR RETIREMENT CREDIT FOR EDUCATIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM](#) should be submitted along with a request for leave at least three months in advance of the leave period. The form must be accompanied by a letter from the employee to his or her department head indicating the inclusive dates of the leave, the purpose of the leave, and the benefits to the university. Such requests must be approved by the employee's department head, the chief business officer (referred to on the state form as budget director), the chief human resources officer, and the campus or institute chief administrator. In the case of faculty or staff development grants, undergraduate degrees, or professional certifications, additional approvals at the campus or institute may be required. The educational leave form, the letter, and

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any additional documentation should be sent to Benefits and Retirement Services for review and submission to the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS). The TCRS Board of Trustees is responsible for granting final approval for retirement credit.

6. Employees who have received final approval from the university and the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) for the period of the leave will continue to accrue creditable service or have employer contributions paid on their behalf or both. Such individuals cannot participate simultaneously in any other retirement system. Employees who are denied retirement credit by TCRS will be removed from participation in the retirement program for the duration of the leave.
7. To be considered for retirement credit, the leave must be for the purpose of attending school or engaging in academic research related to employment, and must be intended to increase the employee's usefulness to the university. Approval by TCRS is granted conditionally upon the employee's returning to work within one year following the leave period and remaining employed for at least one year. An individual may not receive retirement credit for educational leave in excess of two years during the individual's lifetime unless such credit was extended prior to July 1, 1980. An employee who receives a competitive grant from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Institute of Health, the National Science Foundation, the National Endowments for the Humanities, the National Endowments for the Arts, or the Fulbright Program may receive an additional two (2) years of retirement credit not to exceed an aggregate of four (4) years. Employees who have received approval from the university and TCRS will receive retirement credit for the period of the leave.
8. Examples of the types of leave which will be considered for retirement credit are as follows:
 - a. The leave is for formal study at an institution of higher education leading to an advanced degree in a field relevant to the faculty or staff member's area of professional responsibility.

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- b. The leave is for a formal period of research or post-doctoral study in a field related to the faculty or staff member's area of professional responsibility. Such leaves will include, but not be limited to, periods of study supported by the University of Tennessee Faculty/Staff Development Grants or externally-funded grants, such as the Guggenheim, Fulbright-Hayes, Rockefeller Foundation, or Ford Foundation fellowships.
 - c. In rare cases retirement credit will be allowed for an approved educational leave for formal study leading to an undergraduate degree or professional certification directly related to enhancing an employee's ability to perform his or her job.
9. If retirement credit for leave of absence is approved by TCRS, creditable service and/or contributions during the leave will be handled in the following manner:
- a. **Employees Receiving Full Compensation**
 - i. **TCRS Member.** Creditable service in TCRS will be granted for the period of the leave and employer contributions will be made.
 - ii. **JCRS Member.** Creditable service in TCRS will be granted for the period of the leave. Also, employer contributions equal to 10% of salary will be forwarded to the designated Optional Retirement Program (ORP) company(ies).
 - iii. **ORP Member.** Employer contributions equal to 10% of salary (11% of salary above the social security wage base) will be forwarded to the designated ORP company(ies), contingent on IRS maximums.
 - b. **Employees Receiving Partial Compensation**
 - i. **TCRS Member.** Creditable service in TCRS will be granted for the period of the leave and employer contributions will be made based on the reduced salary.
 - ii. **JCRS Member.** Creditable service in TCRS will be granted for the period of leave. Also, employer contributions equal to 10% of the partial compensation will be forwarded to the designated ORP company(ies).

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- iii. **ORP Member.** Employer contributions equal to 10% (11% of salary above the social security wage base) of salary before the leave will be forwarded to the designated ORP company(ies).
- c. **Employees Receiving No Compensation**
 - i. **TCRS Member.** Creditable service will be granted but no employer contributions will be made.
 - ii. **JCRS Member.** Creditable service will be granted in TCRS, but no employer contributions will be forwarded to the designated ORP company(ies).
 - iii. **ORP Member.** Employer contributions based on the salary immediately before the leave will be forwarded to the ORP company(ies) in an amount equal to 10% of salary (11% of salary above the social security wage base).

PROCEDURES:

Health Science Center:	https://uthsc.policymedical.net/policymed/home/index?ID=de47aa28-16aa-408b-9c96-cb04f232964f&
Space Institute:	http://www.utsi.edu/index.php/utsi-procedures/
Institute of Agriculture:	ag.tennessee.edu/Pages/UTIApolicies.aspx

FORMS:

- [Application for Retirement Credit for Educational Leave of Absence](#)
- [Request for Special Payment Form T-27](#)

Related Policies: [HR0330 - Educational Assistance \(Fee Waiver\)](#)