**Sabbatical leave policy**

**What is a sabbatical?**

A sabbatical allows an employee to take a short career break in order to pursue other interests. It’s also referred to as un-paid leave.

This policy permits employees to take a period of sabbatical leave of between four and 26 weeks’ duration. (Change duration as required)

**Benefits of a sabbatical**

The company recognises that employees make a substantial commitment to its success. In return, the company recognises the need for employees to take an extended period of time away from work to undertake study, to provide care for a dependant, to go on the holiday of a lifetime or to pursue other interests such as family, charitable or public service.

The above reasons are not exhaustive and requests for sabbatical leave for other reasons will be considered. All requests will be considered carefully save for those expressly not permitted as set out in this policy.

**Eligibility**

The employee must have completed *[insert number]* years’ service with the Company, counted from the start of the calendar year in which the request is made. (2 years of service could be considered average).

There may be some exceptions to the continuous service requirement and line managers should contact Human Resources for guidance if the request relates to an employee’s caring responsibilities, religion etc.

Employees will not be permitted to take sabbatical leave in order to undertake a trial in another job/profession.

**Request process**

Request should be made in good time before the leave would start. Ideally (? Months). Employees should write to their line manager including details on:

* your job title
* start date
* preferred sabbatical leave start date
* likely duration
* reason for request
* how he/she thinks the Company will be affected by the absence
* how he/she thinks those potential problems may be overcome.

The line manager will then make a decision on whether the request can be accommodated. Employees should be aware that their line manager may authorise or decline the request, or attempt to come to a different, but mutually agreeable arrangement. Written reasons will be provided for any declined requests.

**Consideration of requests**

The following will be taken into consideration when dealing with a request which may make an employee ineligible to take sabbatical leave:

* action taken in relation to the individual’s performance, conduct or attendance
* the needs of the business, or anticipated needs of the business, dictate that a period of sabbatical leave would not be tenable for the period of time requested eg too many employees are on leave
* difficulty in covering the function of the particular employee.

**Pay and benefits**

Generally, contractual entitlements will be suspended for the duration of the sabbatical leave. More details are given below:

* wages will not be paid during sabbatical leave
* eligibility for a bonus or incentive will continue, however, this will be on a pro rata basis according to individual performance and service completed during the performance year
* pension scheme membership will not be affected
* start date of continuous service will not be affected and the period spent on sabbatical leave will count towards continuous service
* statutory annual leave will continue to accrue at the statutory minimum rate of 5.6 weeks per year. Contractual annual leave accrual will be suspended during sabbatical leave. Employees will receive a pro rata entitlement of contractual annual leave corresponding to the amount of time worked during the leave year in which the sabbatical leave is taken.

**Returning to work**

Upon return from sabbatical leave, an employee will normally re-take up the role he/she was performing prior to the commencement of leave. However, this may be affected any redundancy or reorganisation that takes place during the employee’s sabbatical leave. The Company will ensure that the employee is fully consulted about any changes at the earliest available opportunity, given that the nature of the sabbatical can mean that the employee is not contactable due to overseas travel.