



# Education Leave

Category:	Employment
Number:	
Audience:	University Employees
Issued:	January 25, 2015
Owner:	VP Academic/Director of Human Resources
Approved by:	Board of Governors
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## Introduction

Throughout its history, FNUniv has undertaken to cultivate talented individuals, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, some of whom would benefit from further educational attainment to enhance their performance of the responsibilities entailed with faculty and staff positions at our institution. In the case of faculty, FNUniv has provided support for members engaged in doctoral and other graduate studies, while in the case of staff, support has been given to support learning at both the undergraduate and graduate level, in the form of complete programs or individual courses. While this support has been made available to faculty and staff of all backgrounds, it has been particularly important in the case of First Nations and other Indigenous candidates, as development of qualified Indigenous faculty is consonant with the institution's strategic vision, mission and mandate.

Education leave provides learning opportunities, agreed upon between the employee and the employer, which will benefit the institution and further its strategic objectives. Education leave provides the opportunity for employees to enhance their knowledge, skills and abilities in areas identified by the department as critical existing or future needs.

## Policy

The policy and procedures for education leave for unionized employees (URFA Faculty; URFA Administrative, Professional and Technical; and CUPE) are detailed in their respective collective bargaining agreement (CBA) articles. For members of these three bargaining units, the terms under which educational supports are granted are contractually negotiated by management and approved the Board. It is management's responsibility to ensure that those terms are followed to the mutual benefit of the institution and those faculty and staff members receiving support.

The URFA faculty CBA contains contractually agreed-upon articles that spell out the terms under which education leave and other educational supports are granted to faculty members. In addition, it is important to note that education leave and support is also available to members of

the other two bargaining units on campus (CUPE and APT) according to the terms of their CBAs. These terms include:

- Eligibility
- Application procedures
- Duration of support
- Types and levels of financial compensation
- Stipulations for return-to-service

For OOS employees, any education leave must adhere to the terms specified in the policy below. Any exception to this policy must be approved by the line Vice-President.

In order for education leave to be approved for an employee in any of the four employee groups (faculty, APT, CUPE and OOS), an agreement outlining the duration and terms of the leave, including the level of institutional support and expected return to service, must be signed before the commencement of the leave by the employee, his/her supervisor, the President or line Vice-President (as appropriate), and the union (as required in CBAs).

While respecting the contractual agreements and policy documents relative to all four groups of employees, management will abide by a number of key principles when determining whether to provide education leave and support. These principles include:

1) Priority of First Nations and other Aboriginal Employees

The CBA between FNUUniv's faculty and the University of Regina Faculty Association (URFA) includes articles that speak to the priority of fostering and promoting First Nations and other Aboriginal persons, within an institutional context that promotes diversity while upholding the importance of non-discrimination (Articles 3 and 4). While the other two CBAs do not include such language, FNUUniv has historically sought to recruit, retain and support staff members of Indigenous ancestry, which has sometimes included making educational opportunities available to them within the terms of their contractual agreements. Over the past forty years, FNUUniv has been a leader in recruiting Indigenous faculty candidates and in providing them with support to achieve terminal degrees in their disciplines of study. In a number of cases, this support has yielded highly qualified PhD-prepared faculty members who are at the forefront of their fields. Currently, management is continuing this kind of support for faculty members, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, while observing the terms of the collective agreements.

2) Requirements Stipulated at the Time of Hiring

In the case of faculty members who are hired without terminal degrees in their disciplines, management can stipulate within their letters of appointment completion of the credential within a certain period of time as a precondition of permanency and/or promotion. In the case of staff members, letters of appointment can include requirements for the completion of a certificate, diploma, degree or other credential as a condition for successful completion of probation.

3) Determination of Appropriate Programs

While recognizing the principle of academic freedom, Department Heads and the Vice-President Academic will work in consultation with faculty members to determine into which PhD or other terminal degree programs they should enroll in order to receive institutional support. These programs should relate directly to the faculty member's disciplinary appointment, as well as to the academic vision and mission of the institution, and must have strong potential to benefit students, generate research that will support Indigenous individual and communities, and enhance institutional reputation.

4) Duration of Programs and Time-to-Completion

Educational leaves, courses releases, and time away from the office to take courses all require a financial commitment on the part of the University; they also require faculty members to be away for periods from their teaching, and service responsibilities. It is management's duty to ensure that faculty and staff are aware of the duration periods allowed by their CBAs or by policy for education leave, and to support members' progress in reaching their goals within those prescribed periods. This includes careful monitoring by supervisors of the progress of members pursuing educational programs to ensure that they will complete in timely fashion and return to service to provide benefits to the institution. Members who do not progress within the time periods agreed upon for their leaves will be notified that extensions will not be granted.

5) Financial Impact on the Institution

While the importance of providing educational leave and support to faculty and staff, especially those of First Nations and other Aboriginal heritage, is clear, management also has a duty to carefully manage the financial costs and impacts of such support on the teaching and research missions of the institutions. Working within the terms of the collective agreements and the OOS policy, management can effectively control the costs of educational support across all three bargaining units. Management has the duty to communicate clearly to faculty and staff the maximum expenditures allowed for educational leave and support. Faculty and staff who are eligible to receive financial support from their First Nations or other Indigenous community for their educational programs are required to do so before seeking financial support from the University. Employees will be required to provide proof of the level of support (or lack of support) available from their communities or other sources. The costs of educational support must be projected in the annual budget approved by the Board.

## **EDUCATION LEAVE FOR OUT-OF-SCOPE EMPLOYEES**

Eligible out-of-scope employees may apply for education leave of absence with or without pay, limited to one year in length. The university may award grants up to 80 per cent of the member's salary to assist with the costs associated with educational advancement.

Employees must have a minimum of three years' service before requesting leave. Requests for leave shall be directed first to the employee's supervisor, who will then make a recommendation to the line Vice-President.

Employees who qualify for educational assistance on the basis of Indigenous ancestry are required to pursue such funding for the education leave period prior to the approval of the partial pay from the University.

All applications for the leave shall be in writing and must have authorization from the supervisor, who will make a recommendation to the line Vice-President. All applications shall provide a comprehensive description of the program or course offering, duration, its relationship and benefit to the employee's job function.

The Vice-President shall have the right to accept, deny, or grant modified or conditional acceptance to all applications for education leave of absence. The Vice-President, at his/her discretion, may extend any leave to an employee.

All employees who are approved for education leave shall enter into a leave agreement with the University. This agreement will be drafted by Human Resources in consultation with the supervisor and the employee. The agreement will be signed by the Vice-President, the employee and the supervisor.

While on leave, the member shall receive any generally applicable salary increases. The employee may be entitled to prorated benefits during his/her leave of absence, depending on the duration of the leave. These benefits will be articulated in the leave agreement.

The leave agreement will stipulate the employee's required return-to-service, as follows: the recipient of an education leave grant must agree to return to duties at the University for a period equal to the time the staff member was absent, or to reimburse the University for the full amount of the grant received. If a member returns to the University for a period of time less than the length of the leave, the reimbursement shall be prorated accordingly. Upon return to employment from leave of absence, the University will make an effort to place the employee in the position previously held by him/her or, where that is not possible, in an equivalent position at the discretion of the Vice-President. The applicant is required to have successfully completed the course of study.

### **Role and Responsibilities:**

The employee will:

- Submit a written application explaining their interest in a program, costs associated with the program and dates they wish to attend. This application has to be submitted to the supervisor at least two months in advance of the program starting.

The supervisor will:

- Make a recommendation to the Vice-President regarding the education leave
- Ensure coverage of the employee's assigned duties if the education leave is approved

Human Resources will:

- File all information into the employee's personnel file
- Draft the leave agreement and forward for signatures

## Processes

- 1) Employees must submit a written request for the leave of absence to their supervisor for approval at least two (2) months prior to the leave commencing.
- 2) The approved leave of absence request is forwarded to the Vice-President for final approval, including all related documents such as course offering, Aboriginal sponsorship letter, etc.
- 3) The approved leave of absence is forwarded to Human Resources for administration.
- 4) Human Resources shall create the leave agreement and forward for signatures and copy the personnel file.

## Related Information

- [CUPE Local 5791 Collective Agreement](#)
- [URFA Academic Staff Collective Agreement](#)
- [URFA Administrative, Professional and Technical \(APT\) Collective Agreement](#)