

Guidelines for Submitting Sabbatical Leave Proposals



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General Information

Sabbatical Leave Program (UCA Faculty Handbook, Ch. 4, Section XII.D.)

The university supports a sabbatical leave program for tenured faculty members who have at least six years of service with the university. Sabbatical leaves will be for one semester at full stipend or one academic year at half stipend. In the case of faculty members on 12-month appointments, a summer leave may be granted at full stipend. The number of sabbaticals available will be limited by the funds available. Additional leaves may be applied for after each six-year period of service.

A faculty member on sabbatical leave may participate in university affairs and retains the right to vote, except in those cases where the faculty member would be participating or voting in a representative capacity. A faculty member on leave may vote in absentia. Absentee votes must be received in writing by the appropriate official prior to the day of the scheduled vote. It is not the responsibility of the university to inform faculty on leave of pending university business.

Applications for sabbatical leave awards are available on the Academic Affairs website. Completed applications are reviewed by the university sabbatical leave review committee, and recommendations are made to the provost. The provost will review the recommendations of the committee and make recommendations to the president. The president will submit those to be recommended to the Board of Trustees. Each applicant approved will be given written notification by the president indicating the action of the board.

A faculty member going on leave with pay must sign an agreement to return to the university for one academic year or repay the stipend and cost of employee benefits received while on sabbatical leave.

Sabbatical Leave Review Committee

Charge: The committee will evaluate applications for faculty sabbatical leaves and make recommendations to the provost. Both the committee recommendation and the provost's recommendation are forwarded along with the applicant's file to the president.

Membership: The associate provost, as designated by the provost, two tenured faculty members elected by each of the academic colleges, and one tenured faculty member who is not affiliated with the colleges to serve three-year rotating terms. Deans and departmental chairs are ineligible to serve, and no more than one member of a department may serve at a time. Members may not serve more than two successive terms (excluding the associate provost). The associate provost serves as chair.

Meetings: Early October, after the October 1 deadline for fall and spring sabbatical leave applications submitted in the fall semester of the academic year prior to the academic year of the requested sabbatical.

Reports to: Provost

The committee is convened by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Contact the Office of the Provost with any questions regarding eligibility and the Graduate School with questions about the application process.

Before You Apply

Before starting your application, make sure you have the following in order:

- Confirm you meet all eligibility requirements (tenured, at least six years of full-time service, not currently on or recently returned from sabbatical).
- Identify your sabbatical period (one semester, full year, or summer for 12-month appointments).
- Draft your project abstract and objectives before starting the full application.
- Secure or initiate contact with any external collaborators, facilities, or resource providers.
- Gather documentation for secured or pending external resources (Letters of Support, MOUs, permits).
- Obtain IRB approval or confirm IRB submission timeline if your project involves human subjects.
- Discuss coverage arrangements with your department chair.
- Prepare your abbreviated CV, emphasizing the past 10 years and work directly relevant to this proposal.
- Review the Sabbatical Leave Review Rubric (available at the end of this guide) before writing.

Preparing Your Sabbatical Application

We know that preparing a competitive proposal takes thought and effort. This guide is designed to help you understand what the review committee is looking for and how to present your project in the strongest possible light. The most successful applications are those that are clear, specific, and well-aligned with UCA's mission and strategic priorities.

The Power of Specificity

- **The single most important factor in a successful application is specificity.** Review committee members come from across disciplines and may not be familiar with your field. They need concrete details to evaluate the feasibility and value of your project.
- Vague statements like “I will conduct research” or “This will benefit students” cannot be scored on the rubric. Instead, tell the committee exactly what you will do, when, where, with whom, and what specific outcomes you expect.

Tips for Being Specific:

- Use names and numbers: Instead of “community partners,” name them: “Central Arkansas Library System and the Arkansas Arts Center.” Instead of “several courses,” specify: “BIOL 3310 (Neuroethology, enrollment ~45) and BIOL 4431 (Experimental Molecular Biology, enrollment ~30).”
- Include dates and locations: Rather than “I will travel to archives,” write: “I will spend February 10–March 15, 2028 at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.”
- Describe measurable outcomes: Don't say “I will write articles.” Instead: “I will complete two journal articles for submission to the Journal of X and Y Review (both peer-reviewed, combined impact factor of 3.2).”
- Show your progress: Tell us what you've already done: “I have completed a pilot study with 30 participants and secured IRB approval (Protocol #2025-123)”

Walking Through the Application Sections

A. Project Abstract

What reviewers need: A clear, jargon-free summary that anyone can understand. Remember, many committee members are not from your field.

Be specific about the following: (1) What you will produce (manuscripts, curriculum, datasets), (2) Why it matters now, (3) Who benefits.

Example: Weak: "I will study climate change impacts in Arkansas." Strong: "I will analyze 20 years of temperature and precipitation data from 15 Arkansas weather stations to produce a climate assessment report for the Arkansas Department of Agriculture and three peer-reviewed articles on regional climate trends."

B. Project Objectives & Methodology

What reviewers need: Specific, measurable objectives and a clear explanation of your approach. List concrete work products (manuscripts, exhibits, curricula, datasets, grant proposals).

Be specific about the following: (1) Each deliverable by name/title, (2) Your methods or creative process, (3) Preliminary work completed, (4) How you'll measure success.

Example work products: "Two journal manuscripts (for Journal of X and Y Review), one NSF grant proposal (\$500K target), and a revised curriculum for CHEM 3450 incorporating green chemistry principles."

C. Timeline

What reviewers need: A realistic breakdown organized across three phases: pre-sabbatical, during sabbatical, and post-sabbatical. Generic timelines (“first half: reading, second half: writing”) suggest poor planning.

Be specific about the following: (1) Preparatory work completed before the sabbatical begins, (2) exact dates for travel, data collection, or archival work during the sabbatical, (3) completion dates for deliverables after returning.

Example: Pre-sabbatical: “October–December 2027: Obtain IRB approval and finalize interview protocol.”

During: “January 2028: Begin interviews in Little Rock. February 10–March 15: Complete 40 interviews in Fayetteville. March 16–April 15: Transcribe and code data.”

Post-sabbatical: “May–June 2028: Draft first article for Educational Researcher (target submission: June 15).”

D. Funding & Resources

What reviewers need: Evidence that you’ve secured (or have a clear plan to secure) what you need. Projects with confirmed external resources score higher on feasibility.

Be specific about the following: (1) Status of each resource (secured, pending, needed), (2) names of collaborators or facilities, (3) documentation for external resources.

For external resources, the strongest applications include the following:

- **Secured resources:** Letter of Support from the resource provider or copy of relevant permits (e.g., data collection permits, facility access agreements).
- **Pending resources:** Letter of Support or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) indicating committed intent.

Example: “Laboratory access secured at UAMS Center for Translational Neuroscience (confirmed via letter from Dr. Smith, attached). Applied for \$8,000 grant from Arkansas Biosciences Institute (decision March 2027); if not funded, will use personal conference travel funds to cover sequencing costs.”

E. Significance & Broader Impact

What reviewers need: Evidence that your project is significant and will make a meaningful contribution. Projects may have local, regional, national, or international significance. Impact may be demonstrated through scholarly or creative contributions, community engagement, or both.

Be specific about the following: (1) The significance of the work and why it matters now (cite data or reports where relevant), (2) named stakeholders, organizations, communities, disciplines, or audiences who will benefit, (3) your dissemination plan, (4) what is at stake if this work is not done, or not done now.

On the cost of inaction: Reviewers want to understand what is lost, missed, or set back if this project does not move forward during this sabbatical period. A strong application articulates genuine urgency, not just the value of the work itself.

Note: The nature of impact varies by discipline. Applicants are encouraged to describe the significance of their work in terms appropriate to their field. For creative work where outcomes may be inherently uncertain, focus on the significance of the inquiry itself and the process of making.

Example: “Arkansas ranks 46th nationally in teacher retention (2024 report). This project will produce a professional development module for K-12 teachers in partnership with Little Rock School District (120 teachers enrolled in pilot). If this work is delayed, the district loses a funded pilot cohort already committed for spring 2026, a partnership that cannot be reconstructed on a different timeline.”

F. University Benefit

What reviewers need: Clear evidence that UCA, not just your discipline, will be enhanced. Address at least one category: instructional effectiveness, scholarly/creative contributions, or university partnerships. Strong applications also connect their work to UCA's commitment to Discovery in Action (Strategic Plan: Imperative 3).

Be specific about the following: (1) Course names and enrollment numbers, (2) where you'll publish, present, or exhibit, (3) partner organizations and the nature of collaboration, (4) practical or actionable outcomes the project will produce.

When describing university benefit, consider the following: What practical outcomes will this produce beyond traditional publications? Does it involve students (if applicable)? How does it demonstrate that inquiry leads to actionable outcomes?

Example (instruction): "I will redesign HIST 3365 (Modern African History, enrollment ~35) to include primary source analysis modules developed during archival research."

Example (scholarship): "I will submit articles to two top-tier journals in my field and present findings at the American Psychological Association conference (8,000 attendees), raising UCA's national research profile."

Example (Discovery in Action): "Beyond the three peer-reviewed articles, this project will produce a white paper for the Arkansas Department of Health with policy recommendations on rural healthcare access. Two graduate students will participate in data analysis, gaining skills they'll apply in their master's theses."

G. Sabbatical Necessity

What reviewers need: A compelling explanation for why this project requires extended, focused time away from teaching and service. Reassigned time or summer stipends should be demonstrably insufficient.

Be specific about the following: (1) Why the project can't be broken into smaller chunks, (2) time-sensitive opportunities (archive access, seasonal fieldwork, collaborator availability), (3) the cognitive demands of sustained focus.

Example: "The National Archives in College Park limits research visits to 6-week blocks. I need continuous access January–March 2028 to review an estimated 1,200 documents across 15 archival collections. This immersive work cannot be accomplished with one course release, as I need sustained focus to identify patterns across multiple collections."

H. Abbreviated CV

What reviewers need: Evidence that you complete what you start. Your CV should demonstrate your track record and highlight work most directly relevant to this proposal.

Be specific about the following: Emphasize accomplishments from the past 10 years in teaching (courses taught, course development), research/creative work (publications, grants, exhibitions), and service. Work beyond 10 years may be included to highlight significant career accomplishments directly relevant to this proposal.

Final Tips for Success

- **Show your track record:** Your abbreviated CV should demonstrate that you complete what you start. Highlight relevant past projects, especially previous sabbaticals or reassigned time, and their outcomes.
- **Avoid jargon:** Write for an intelligent non-specialist. If you must use technical terms, briefly define them.
- **Address the rubric categories:** The review committee uses a detailed rubric. Make sure your proposal clearly addresses Project Clarity, Significance & Broader Impact, University Benefit, Feasibility, and Sabbatical Necessity.
- **Get feedback:** Have a colleague from a different discipline review your draft. Their perspective will help ensure your project's significance is accessible to the broader committee.
- **Stay within page limits:** Section II should be 5-8 pages. Use appendices for supporting details if needed.

A strong sabbatical proposal takes time to develop, but the investment is worth it. If you have questions, please contact the Dean of the Graduate School or the Office of the Provost.

Format

The sabbatical leave application is available in **Word (DOCX)** format at <https://uca.edu/academicaffairs/sabbatical-leave/>

The final application must be saved and submitted as a PDF with all required signatures. Applicants must complete Sections I and II.

Applications must be typed. Handwritten applications will not be accepted.

Evaluation

Applications must be submitted to the department chair for evaluation. The department chair will complete Section III and then forward the application to the college dean. The college dean will complete Section IV and then forward the application to the Office of the Provost for distribution to the Sabbatical Leave Review Committee.

The Sabbatical Leave Review Committee will evaluate all proposals using the Sabbatical Leave Review Rubric (next page). The Sabbatical Leave Review Committee will make sabbatical leave recommendations to the provost in ranked order.

The provost will then evaluate the applications and make recommendations to the president based on funding availability.

Applications must be submitted according to the posted timeline at <https://uca.edu/academicaffairs/sabbatical-leave/>.

Award Notification

Final notification to faculty who are granted a sabbatical leave is made by the provost following approval by the president and the Board of Trustees. Faculty who are not recommended will be notified by the provost.

Reporting

Not later than 60 days after the conclusion of the sabbatical leave, a final report should be submitted electronically to the provost with copies to the department chair and college dean. A final report form is available at <https://uca.edu/academicaffairs/sabbatical-leave/>.

A reprint of a published article or book resulting from the sabbatical should be submitted upon publication.

Application Evaluation Rubric

CATEGORY	Distinguished - 4	Acceptable - 3	Insufficient - 2	Unacceptable - 1
Project Clarity & Methodology	Abstract, objectives, and methodology are exceptionally clear and specific. Work products are precisely identified with measurable outcomes. Timeline is detailed and realistic with specific dates and milestones.	Abstract, objectives, and methodology are mostly clear. Work products are identified but could be more specific. Timeline is present but lacks some detail or specificity.	Abstract, objectives, or methodology lack clarity or specificity. Work products are vaguely described. Timeline is incomplete or may be unrealistic.	Abstract, objectives, and methodology are unclear or missing. Work products are not identified. Timeline is absent or not feasible.
Significance & Broader Impact	Clearly articulates the significance of the project at the appropriate scope (local, regional, national, or international). Names specific stakeholders, organizations, communities, disciplines, or audiences who will benefit. Dissemination plan is specific and actionable. Compellingly articulates what is at stake if the work is not done or not done now, demonstrating genuine urgency.	Identifies significance with some specificity and appropriate scope. Names some stakeholders or beneficiaries. Dissemination plan is present but could be more detailed. Some sense of urgency conveyed, though the cost of delay or inaction is not fully developed.	Significance is vague or generic. Stakeholders or beneficiaries are not named specifically. Dissemination plan is weak or absent. Little or no articulation of why this work matters now or what would be lost if it were delayed.	No clear significance identified. Beneficiaries not mentioned. No dissemination plan. No sense of urgency or cost of inaction.
University Benefit	Provides specific, measurable benefits to UCA in at least one required category (instructional, scholarly/creative, or partnerships). Names specific courses with enrollment data, concrete dissemination plans for scholarship, or established collaborative relationships. Clear enhancement to UCA mission/capacity.	Addresses university benefit in at least one category but lacks some specificity. May name courses but without enrollment data, or describe scholarship without clear dissemination, or mention partnerships without details.	University benefit is vague or generic. Does not clearly address required benefit categories or lacks evidence of enhancement to UCA capacity.	University benefit is not addressed or is entirely unclear.
Project Feasibility	High likelihood of successful completion based on the following: preliminary work completed, arrangements for needed resources secured or in progress, realistic timeline with specific dates, strong track record in CV of completing similar work, particularly from prior sabbaticals/reassigned time/stipends.	Moderate likelihood of completion. Some preliminary work or resource arrangements evident. Timeline is mostly realistic. CV shows some relevant work, but track record is not as strong as it might be for this project.	Low likelihood of completion. Little preliminary work shown. Resources not secured or arrangements unclear. Timeline questionable. CV shows limited relevant experience or weak track record.	Minimal likelihood of completion. No preliminary work evident. Resources not addressed. Timeline unrealistic or absent. CV does not demonstrate capacity for project.
Sabbatical Necessity	Project clearly requires extended, focused time away from regular duties. Provides specific justification for why reassigned time or summer stipend would be insufficient. Sabbatical is essential for project success.	Project would benefit from sabbatical, but justification could be stronger. Some explanation of why other options insufficient.	Moderate likelihood project could be completed with reassigned time or summer stipend. Sabbatical justification is weak or generic.	High likelihood project could be completed without sabbatical or as part of regular duties. No convincing justification for sabbatical necessity.

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