



eSTEEeM Extended Leave of Absence Guidance

1. Introduction

eSTEEeM is committed to managing its portfolio of scholarship, research and innovation projects, and to supporting staff professional development in the pedagogy of STEM education. This is achieved through an open call to all STEM staff inviting submissions of scholarship projects which are aligned to the strategic priorities of the University.

This guidance outlines the procedure for project leaders of formally endorsed eSTEEeM projects who are required to take an extended leave of absence beyond the customary period of annual leave; thereby, providing individuals with the necessary support before, during and after their period of absence and ensuring the prevention of any unlawful discrimination.

This guidance is subject to, and should be read alongside, the standard Open University leave policies which are available on the People Services website (<http://intranet6.open.ac.uk/human-resources/how-guides>)

2. Operation

Once an eSTEEeM project has been officially endorsed by the eSTEEeM directorate and the time commitment granted approval by the project leader's HoS, it becomes an officially supported eSTEEeM project. As such, project leaders will be required to carry out their project in accordance with their submitted project plans and account for the days spent/intend to spend through the academic workload management system, completing the project within the agreed timescale.

If a project leader is required to take an extended leave of absence, eSTEEeM will allow the project to extend beyond the original timescale. eSTEEeM has identified the following instances where staff may require further guidance.

Planned leave which may include –

- Maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave
- Sabbaticals and career breaks
- Unpaid leave for caring responsibilities

The project leader must notify the eSTEEem directorate/manager before the extended absence is due to commence in order to agree on a time period for which the project will either be placed on hold or, where applicable, the role of interim project leader will be allocated to another member of the project team who will continue project activities in the project leader's absence. If the project is placed on hold, a revised project plan will be required to be produced accordingly.

Where applicable, the project leader may use some of their Keeping in Touch (KIT) days to maintain contact with the interim project leader during their absence.

In all instances, upon return to work, the project leader is required to notify the eSTEEem directorate/manager in order to arrange a 'return to work' meeting. A discussion with the eSTEEem directorate (and interim project leader if applicable) will be required to update on the status of the project and to agree a revised project plan and timescale for completion.

For instances of unplanned leave such as –

- Long term sick leave

We would ask the project leader to notify the eSTEEem directorate/manager of their absence as soon as they are reasonably able to do so; this may also be through a message from the project leader's line manager. The project will initially be placed on hold for a period of three months or until the project leader returns to work, whichever event occurs first.

Alternatively, where applicable, an interim project leader will be identified from the project team who will continue project activities in the project leader's absence.

Upon return to work, the project leader is required to notify the eSTEEem directorate/manager to arrange a 'return to work' meeting. A discussion with the eSTEEem directorate (and interim project leader if applicable) will be required to update on the status of the project and to agree a revised project plan and timescale for completion.

Feedback

We welcome your suggestions about how we could improve these guidelines and the way they operate. Please send your feedback and comments to us at esteem@open.ac.uk.

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