

## Final Report

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Project summary	Researching the potential of the sabbatical to enhance research and teaching links
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## Foreword

The issues to which this report draws attention are in some ways familiar to those working in higher education – notably the pressure of time and the difficulties arising from what Richard Collier characterised as the ‘indeterminacy’ of academic life (2002, p21). Matters such as regrets about not being able to devote sufficient time to teaching and particular pressure on early career academics are themes which also arose in my own work on legal academics (Cownie, 2004). But there are some issues raised by this report which deserve further analysis (and which I am sure the authors will address in their future publications). One such issue is the effect of the current financial situation on the availability of sabbaticals. Will the regular sabbatical, available almost as a matter of routine to research active staff, and previously common in pre-1992 institutions, be something we look back on as part of a golden era? And if that were to become the case, what effect would that have on the development of the discipline of law, and on the working lives of individual legal academics? As Mary Henkel’s research shows, research is a key aspect of the professional identity of many academics, so it is unlikely that mere lack of research leave would actually stop individuals engaging in it (Henkel, 2000, ch 9). But would lack of research leave result in increased applications to the research councils to buy out academic time, as university managers may hope? Or would there be passive resistance? Would legal academics merely retreat into library-based research to enable them to pursue their own research agendas?

Another issue is the research-teaching nexus. Although we can find extensive discussion of the relationship between teaching and research in the literature (see the bibliography on this subject referred to in the report), what is interesting about this piece of research is the way in which it highlights the direct contribution that research leave makes to teaching, which is an aspect of research leave that is likely previously to have gone unremarked. This finding is particularly interesting when read together with research on student perceptions and experience. Elsen et al (2009, pp68-69) note that students tend to be more motivated when they become familiar with the research done by academic staff at an early stage in their studies, and that when staff incorporated their own research into their teaching ‘...students perceived their courses as up to date, stimulating intellectual excitement and giving the impression that staff were enthusiastic about what they were teaching’.

This report adds to our knowledge of an aspect of academic life which was hitherto under-researched, contributing to the ongoing project of uncovering the lived experience of legal academics. I look forward to reading the authors’ further analysis of their data in due course.

Professor Fiona Cownie, Keele University  
May 2010

## Project aims

- To contribute to the body of theory and to provide empirical evidence on how the working practices of academics, in particular the practice of sabbaticals, impact on their teaching.
- To explore the experiences of staff who have been awarded sabbaticals, with a view to publishing examples of good practice in relation to their effect on teaching and the curriculum.
- To suggest alternative ways to maximise the pedagogic benefits from sabbaticals.

## Introduction

The project arose from the professional interests of the researchers in developing the scholarship of teaching, in particular in encouraging a closer relationship between disciplinary teaching and research. Neither the award of sabbaticals nor their potential pedagogic impact has been extensively researched in the United Kingdom. The project builds on previous work by the researchers into sabbaticals in law school (Spencer & Kent, 2007) and contributes to the body of theory on how the working practices of legal academics impact on their teaching, an area which has been researched by writers such as Cownie (2004) and Collier (2002). We acknowledge our debt also to the work of Professor Mick Healey of the University of Gloucestershire, who has published extensively on the links between teaching and research and has generously given us advice on the project. The researchers are very grateful to Professor Fiona Cownie for acting as consultant on the research and for writing the Foreword. We would also like to thank Oriola Sallavaci for assisting with the research and John Koushappas of Middlesex University for his technical support in relation to the online questionnaire. The research findings formed the basis of a presentation to the Learning in Law Annual Conference in January 2010 and of a future presentation to the Legal Education Subject Section of the Conference of the Society of Legal Scholars in September 2010. They will also inform an article for submission to a peer reviewed journal.

This report opens with a brief overview of the academic literature. It outlines the published sabbatical policies of universities in England, Wales and Scotland insofar as they acknowledge teaching, sets out our methodology and summarises our findings from the questionnaire. It continues with an account of relevant themes explored through face to face interviews with volunteers from the survey. The report concludes by demonstrating how the project has identified some dimensions of the research-teaching nexus in university law schools. It places the accompanying sabbatical guidance materials in this context and refers the reader to the more concrete proposals which arise in part from the examples of good practice highlighted by recipients of national teaching awards and uncovered in our research.

## Literature review

The theoretical underpinning of this research study is the considerable volume of publications on the relationship between teaching and research<sup>1</sup>. Although the majority of commentators agree that a closer link between these aspects of academic identity is desirable, there is considerable debate about how to achieve it. A fundamental question is whether they are indeed separate activities or form part of a continuum. Bradney (2003 p121), for example, points out that it is axiomatic that all academics engage in research even if only as part of their ‘private activity’ preparing their teaching. In a powerful phrase he portrays the act of learning for both staff and students as ‘the concentration of curiosity’. He writes:

*In the liberal law school, teaching asks the student to consider questions and issues that are set for them and to report their views. The limited tenure of the student in the law school, as well as their apprentice status, means that their views are relatively under-developed in scholarly terms. Research in the liberal law school makes the same demands of the academic as are made of the student except that the academic sets their own questions and their permanent residence in the law school allows for a more developed answer. In both the case of teaching or learning and that of research a liberal education involves no more and no less than the concentration of curiosity.*

Apart from the intellectual coherence identified by Bradney, a closer link between teaching and research does seem to indicate a collegiate and cohesive university environment. Thus Lucas, Healey & Short (2008 p9) write: ‘Research and teaching links seemed strongest in those departments which had a cohesive and collaborative culture, strong academic affiliation, a positive change orientation and flexibility and a positive synergy between departments and institutional goals.’ However, Halse et al (2007 p729) consider that the link is threatened: ‘... as the UK experience suggests, the use of different criteria to manage, evaluate and allocate funds is open to undermining, rather than enhancing, the connection between teaching and research.’ A privileging of research often leads to students being marginalised. Healey & Jenkins (2009 p123) write: ‘The [Research Assessment Exercise] and its successor, the Research Excellence Framework, for example, sit outside any overt connection to the undergraduate curriculum.’ This privileging of research does not seem to include pedagogic research. Halse et al (2007) examine the experience of Australian National Teaching Fellows to ask whether outstanding university teachers are engaged in research and whether they are disseminating their teaching expertise to other university teachers. They conclude (p742): ‘Although awardees tended to be actively publishing their research, it was not the norm

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<sup>1</sup>See UKCLE’s mini-site on linking teaching and research at <http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/resources/research-teaching-nexus/link/>. For a generic bibliography see *Linking research and teaching: a selected bibliography*, compiled by Mick Healey and available at <http://resources.glos.ac.uk/ceal/resources/litreview.cfm> (accessed on 16 June 2010).

among the case study sample to research their own teaching, or to disseminate their expertise as outstanding teachers to the wider academic community.’ But the authors observe that even if the Teaching Fellows were to publish on pedagogy, that it may not advance their careers. Young (2006 p193) also points out that pedagogic research is not valued: ‘Educational research may be thought to be a way in which staff dedicated to improving teaching can move their achievements from the private to the public domain, gain recognition for their work and acquire the credibility and status linked to research and publishing. However the structure of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) made this difficult in practice.’ The submitted research appears to be overwhelmingly based on the content of disciplines, rather than the process of teaching. Skelton (2004 p200), in an evaluation of the National Teaching Fellowship scheme, also reports a degree of uncertainty about the status and scope of discipline-based pedagogic research.

The literature nonetheless reveals that concerted efforts are being made to forge a link between teaching and research, and various strategies have been developed at the level of the individual academic, the department and the institution as a whole. Many of the most innovative suggestions have come from the United States. Bakker (1995 B3) suggests using what he calls pedagogical impact statements to ‘make teaching and research symbiotic activities’. He writes: ‘I believe that we should make our expectations about relating teaching to research more specific, and that this specificity should appear earlier in the process, when research projects are first planned...Let’s talk about teaching and research at a point when something actually can be done to ensure that they complement and reinforce each other.’

Healey & Jenkins (2009) cite many such initiatives in the USA and the UK in a review for the Higher Education Academy. None of these appear specifically to refer to examples from law. The authors point out (p108) that ‘[I]n the mid 1990s the US National Science Foundation reviewed its programmes and competitive research grant procedures to ensure that high level research more significantly impacted on the wider society. This review resulted in a major redrafting of its criteria for research awards to include strong criteria to require research dissemination and undergraduate as well as postgraduate involvement.’ The Foundation now requires pedagogic impact to be a condition of grant awards. Healey & Jenkins (p122) conclude: ‘The task then for national systems, institutions and departments is to reinvent and reshape the overall curriculum and other aspects of university structures to support students engaging in research and inquiry. This perspective not only gives due value to all students, it also potentially values all staff - not only research focused academic staff, but also teaching focused academics, librarians, technical support staff, educational developers and so on. For a ‘research active undergraduate curriculum’ to be realised all these roles have to be equally respected and effectively connected.’

Some commentators strike a warning note about the dangers of a token attention to teaching. Lucas, Healey & Short (2008 pp54-55) found ‘significant hostility by a significant number of academic staff to what was perceived as “eduspeak” or educational jargon’, when referring to terms such as ‘research-based teaching learning, enquiry-based

teaching and learning, active learning, experiential learning and problem-based learning'. They add: 'It is important therefore to recognise the forms of academic agency involved in constructing the research-teaching-learning continuum and the need for collective ownership of this process.'

Overall, the literature suggests that, as Lucas, Healey & Short put it (p51), any 'explicit policy linking teaching and research seemed rather ad hoc'. In particular, sabbaticals have hardly figured in the literature in this area, and it is to address this gap in knowledge that this project is directed. They provide a concrete example of the use of time by academics at the micro level and are an indicator of both opportunities and potential barriers to developing a coherent approach to the dual functions of teaching and research.

## Sabbatical policies and teaching

Since a primary objective of the research was investigate the proximity of the link between teaching and research it was relevant to explore how far in principle published university policies allowed sabbaticals for teaching as well as research purposes. Many, but not all, policies were publicly available on the university website. In some other instances where they were not so available, we were grateful to the Human Resource Departments for sending us a printed copy.

Assessing the specific application of the university policy to a law school was problematic. Most published policies that we were able to obtain applied across the whole university, but our subsequent interviews revealed that in some cases departments varied the policy in practice. In some instances, where we obtained both the general policy and that of a specific department (not necessarily Law), there was an apparent distinction between the two. For example, although the general policy of the University of Birmingham<sup>2</sup> appears to contain no specific reference to sabbatical leave being available for teaching, the policy of the School of Computer Science stated that such leave was 'valuable for enabling individual academics to move forward their research and teaching and thus further the aims of the School as a whole'<sup>3</sup>. This suggests that there is scope for departmental variation in the application of university policy. Further research is therefore needed to investigate how far law schools vary general university sabbatical policies.

This section cites those policies which we were able to access and which specifically referred to teaching. We have not included here references to 'scholarship' where the

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<sup>2</sup> University of Birmingham. *Conditions of employment governing academic and related staff: Appendix 1: Leave and secondment* (October 1995), available at [www.hr.bham.ac.uk/policy/terms/Appendix\\_1\\_acad\\_leave.pdf](http://www.hr.bham.ac.uk/policy/terms/Appendix_1_acad_leave.pdf) (accessed on 12 May 2009).

<sup>3</sup> University of Birmingham, School of Computer Science. *Staff handbook: 2.5 Policies and procedures for sabbaticals*, available at [www.cs.bham.ac.uk/internal/staff/handbook/Sabbaticals.php](http://www.cs.bham.ac.uk/internal/staff/handbook/Sabbaticals.php) (accessed on 12 May 2009).

policy does not expressly indicate that this covers pedagogy or teaching<sup>4</sup>. We have, however, included instances where sabbatical leave is identified as being available for unspecified areas of academic work such as ‘other duties’. The relevant extracts are listed here:

- *The purpose of this scheme is to advance the pursuit of scholarship, research and teaching in the University, to encourage and support mutually beneficial relationships with business and industry, and to provide significant development opportunities for individuals. (University of Central Lancashire)*<sup>5</sup>
- *...to further research, scholarship, teaching and learning enhancement, or practice in order to achieve agreed specified objectives that are in support of University and School strategic goals (City University )*<sup>6</sup>
- *All research-active academic staff are eligible to apply for Study Leave for the purpose of progressing their research. Applications for other purposes (for example, to develop new teaching skills, tools and /or material) will also be considered. (University of Kent)*<sup>7</sup>
- *Sabbatical leave is integral to the support of high quality research and of initiatives in teaching. (Lancaster University)*<sup>8</sup>
- *...general purpose of sabbatical leave is to enable members...to undertake preparation of new courses (London School of Economics)*<sup>9</sup>
- *The scheme is seen as supporting four principles of the University’s vision statements:*
  - *working for the world*
  - *taking the lead in research*
  - *enriching the value of learning*
  - *building productive partnerships*

(University of Surrey)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The University of Huddersfield policy states that: “Sabbatical leave is paid leave granted for research and scholarship”. It also states: ‘Teaching Fellowships are specifically available for the development of teaching material’. See [www.hud.ac.uk/hr/policies/?id=1000060](http://www.hud.ac.uk/hr/policies/?id=1000060), (accessed on 12 May 2009).

<sup>5</sup> University of Central Lancashire. *Sabbatical leave scheme 2009/10*, available at [www.uclan.ac.uk/information/staff/staff\\_development/sabbatical.php](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/information/staff/staff_development/sabbatical.php) (accessed on 12 May 2009).

<sup>6</sup> City University. *Sabbatical leave*, available at [www.city.ac.uk/hr/policies/holidays-hours/sabbatical.html](http://www.city.ac.uk/hr/policies/holidays-hours/sabbatical.html) (accessed on 12 May 2009).

<sup>7</sup> University of Kent. *Study leave regulations*, available at [www.kent.ac.uk/hr-staffinformation/documents/policies/academic-absence/1-Academic-study-leave-regulations.pdf](http://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-staffinformation/documents/policies/academic-absence/1-Academic-study-leave-regulations.pdf) (accessed on 12 May 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Lancaster University. *Sabbatical leave scheme*, available at [www.lancs.ac.uk/hr/total-reward/files/sabschem.html](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/hr/total-reward/files/sabschem.html) (accessed on 12 May 2009).

<sup>9</sup> London School of Economics. *Sabbatical leave policy*, available at <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/divisionsAndDepartments/humanResources/academicAndResearchStaff/academicStaffLeave/sabbaticalLeave.aspx> (accessed on 7 July 2010).



- ...assist staff to maintain the high calibre of research and scholarship for which UCL is renowned and can equally encourage the enhancement of teaching quality and innovation (University College London).<sup>11</sup>

Finally, the scheme introduced by Nottingham Trent University contains what appears to be a unique dimension: its Research Leave Scheme allows staff up to five weeks leave 'to enable NTU colleagues to explore the relationships between their research and their teaching'<sup>12</sup>. By contrast, the Research Fellowship Scheme at Keele University states that the policy 'does not include learning and teaching leave'<sup>13</sup>. Thus, as the above account shows, a very small number of published sabbatical policies specifically embrace teaching.

## Methodology

The hypothesis to be tested was that research sabbaticals give minimal attention to pedagogic impact. The research was intended to reveal the extent to which legal academics, both those active in disciplinary research and those engaged primarily or exclusively in teaching, see the desirability of linking sabbatical research and teaching.

The methodology involved the following stages:

1. Identification of universities in England, Wales and Scotland which offer qualifying law degrees (QLDs) and which operate sabbatical policies or appear to offer sabbaticals.
2. Examination of sabbatical leave policies of universities with QLDs to gauge the extent, if any, to which sabbatical leave was expected to contribute to teaching.
3. Allocation of the universities to five geographical regions.
4. Random selection of ten universities in the five regions with QLDs and sabbatical policies (and later substitution of some universities which indicated they could not co-operate or failed to respond to follow-up enquiries).
5. Piloting of a questionnaire in the researchers' own university.
6. Distribution of online questionnaire to the ten selected universities
7. Analysis of results of questionnaires.
8. Identification of volunteers for interview from responses to questionnaire.
9. Semi-structured interviews of the volunteers.

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<sup>10</sup> University of Surrey. *Sabbatical leave policy*, available at [http://portal.surrey.ac.uk/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/HUMANRESOURCES/EMPLOYMENT\\_INFO/POLICIE/S/SABBATICAL\\_LEAVE\\_PROCEDURES\\_1.PDF](http://portal.surrey.ac.uk/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/HUMANRESOURCES/EMPLOYMENT_INFO/POLICIE/S/SABBATICAL_LEAVE_PROCEDURES_1.PDF) (accessed on 12 May 2009).

<sup>11</sup> University College London. *Sabbatical leave policy*, available at [www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/sabbatical.php](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/sabbatical.php) (accessed on 28 April 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Nottingham Trent University. *Working party on research-informed teaching: Research Leave Scheme*, available from <http://www.ntu.ac.uk/CASQ/quality/strategy/58082gp.html> (accessed on 12 May 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Keele University. Research Institute (RI) Research Fellowship Scheme, available at [www.keele.ac.uk/research/research/researchsupport/RIResFellowships.html](http://www.keele.ac.uk/research/research/researchsupport/RIResFellowships.html) (accessed 27 May 2010).

10. Email/telephone interviews of legal academics given awards for teaching excellence and/or those who may have received sabbaticals for teaching purposes. The outcome of this final part of the project is incorporated in the accompanying Sabbatical Guidance Notes.

Universities offering qualifying law degrees (QLDs) were identified on the UKCLE website in England and Wales<sup>14</sup>, and Scotland<sup>15</sup>. A research assistant sought to establish which universities with QLDs had sabbatical policies, either on the Web or available from central services such as Human Resource (HR) departments. This process was not entirely straightforward. In some cases, for example, where we could find no published university policy, other sources confirmed that the law school in practice awarded sabbaticals. Such inconsistencies arose mainly among post-1992 universities. We found that it was almost universal for pre-1992 universities to have a published sabbatical policy.

The researchers divided the list of universities whose sabbatical policies we had obtained<sup>16</sup> into five regions with a view to providing for geographical spread, namely: the North, the Midlands and East Anglia, London and South East England, Wales and South West England, and Scotland. The research sample comprised a total of ten law schools with sabbatical policies in England, Wales and Scotland, selected at random<sup>17</sup>. Two law schools (one pre- and one post-1992) were selected from each of the five regions. We excluded Oxford and Cambridge universities due to their collegiate structure, as well as private universities and the Open University.

We devised a questionnaire to investigate the possible relationship between the taking of sabbatical leave and changes in teaching method and content. This was piloted on members of the researchers' own law school. The questionnaire made use of online software, for which we received extensive support from our university's E-Learning Unit. The initial invitation to complete the questionnaire was made by email<sup>18</sup> in early November 2009 to the head of department in each of the ten law schools, with a request to forward the message to all staff members. The questionnaires were sent on to the heads of department, with a request to forward them to the members of the department. Our objective was to obtain the views not only of 'research active' staff but also those not considered research active in the conventional sense. The email invitation stated that all information supplied would be treated anonymously unless the respondent agreed to be identified. The survey period closed on 27 November 2009.

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<sup>14</sup> See [www.ukcle.ac.uk/directory/england/degrees.html](http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/directory/england/degrees.html) (accessed on 3 March 2009).

<sup>15</sup> See [www.ukcle.ac.uk/directory/scotland](http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/directory/scotland) (accessed on 3 March 2009).

<sup>16</sup> This included one post-1992 university where there was no available current information on a sabbatical policy but where the researchers knew of the existence of a policy from previous research.

<sup>17</sup> The terminology used for 'the law school' varies across universities. We did not seek to distinguish between law schools and law departments, as any such distinction was not relevant to our enquiry.

<sup>18</sup> See the Appendix for a sample email to heads of law schools for forwarding to members of their school/department with an invitation to participate in the survey.

One of the factors predisposing the researchers to an online rather than a postal questionnaire was a predicted postal strike during the response period. This methodology carried a number of problems, in that we were dependent on the co-operation of busy heads of department to forward the email with the questionnaire to members of the department. It was difficult to establish whether or not the request had been forwarded at this initial stage. Our telephone follow-up to see whether any clarification of the request was required may have served as a reminder in some (unidentified) cases. Of the ten law schools approached initially, two heads of department stated that they could not participate as they were not operating a sabbatical policy in practice. Further, we obtained no indication of willingness to respond from four other universities. We therefore wrote to a further six law schools to ensure that there was a reasonable spread across the sector and regions. It proved difficult to obtain a reasonable response rate and to achieve a spread across the sector and the regions. In the event, we obtained responses from two post-1992 universities in London and South East England. The response rate from pre-1992 universities was very poor across all the regions, and post-1992 universities were over-represented (see response to question 2, below). We cannot therefore make any claims of statistical significance because of the small size of the sample and the low response rate. However, the responses suggest trends across the sector and regions which we suggest merit further exploration.

The attempt to contact legal academics through heads of law schools did not, in the event, prove to be a successful one. On a more positive note, although there were only twenty two responses, we were pleased and grateful that fifteen respondents initially offered to be available for further interview. Whilst our response rate was low, it was not out of line with other survey-based research into teaching in higher education.<sup>19</sup>

The researchers had initially envisaged conducting group discussions with staff in law schools but the concept of group discussions proved to be a sensitive one. Only one group discussion took place as some respondents expressed themselves unwilling to take part in discussions where their managers might be present. All other interviews were conducted on an individual basis, with one other respondent interviewed by email exchange. Ten interviews with eleven respondents were conducted between January and May 2010 across the five regions as follows:

- the North: one interview (post-1992 university)
- the Midlands and East Anglia: three interviews (one pre- and two from post-1992 universities)
- London and South East England: four interviews, all post-1992 universities (one group interview with two staff, two interviews with individuals and one email interview)

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the interim report by the Higher Education Academy and GENIE Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, University of Leicester, on *Reward and recognition of teaching in higher education* (2009 p14) which reported ‘a response rate of about 11%’ for their questionnaire. See [www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/rewardandrecog/Reward and Recognition Interim.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/rewardandrecog/Reward_and_Recognition_Interim.pdf) (accessed on 27 May 2010).

- Wales and South West England: one interview (pre-1992 university)
- Scotland: 2 interviews (one pre- and one post-1992 universities)

Of those interviewed face to face, eight were male and four were female. Four (all male) were professors. In citing additional comments from the respondents to the questionnaire and in giving extracts from interviews, we identified contributors by their posts as they described them (see Question 1 below).

The outcomes of the project fall into two parts, namely this report and some additional materials aimed at cementing the link between teaching and research. In order to incorporate the voice of excellent teachers, the researchers contacted by email legal academics whose teaching had been recognised by the award of a National Teaching Fellowship or of the title Law Teacher of the Year (England and Wales) or Law Lecturer of the Year (Scotland)<sup>20</sup>. We obtained ten responses from award winners. Finally, the researchers issued an appeal in the April 2010 UKCLE e-newsletter for information from law lecturers who had received a sabbatical or study leave wholly or partly to develop teaching or the curriculum. Findings from this final part of the project are incorporated in the accompanying materials.

## The questionnaire

The online questionnaire for completion by legal academics asked a series of eighteen questions. The introduction made it clear that we were interested in the views of legal academics granted a sabbatical, as well as staff not considered research active. For the purpose of the questionnaire, ‘sabbaticals’ were defined as *periods of paid leave, usually lasting between three months and a year, taken by members of the academic staff of a university for the purpose of:*

- conducting scholarly research, and/or*
- engaging in the preparation of teaching materials or other work relating to teaching, and/or*
- taking a recognised course of academic or professional study, and/or*
- undergoing a finite period of secondment to work in another institution*<sup>21</sup>

## Key findings

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<sup>20</sup> The lists were obtained from the UKCLE website: see <http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/index.html> (accessed on 12 October 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Periods of unpaid leave were excluded, as were career breaks for family reasons or to employment outside the specific area of academic work.

- All sabbaticals awarded to respondents to the questionnaire were for research. No sabbatical was awarded to prepare teaching materials or for other purposes related to pedagogy.
- Despite the pressure to produce research outputs, half of the respondents who were awarded a sabbatical observed that the sabbatical had a positive effect on teaching.
- Over half of those surveyed thought that there should be no formal obligation to demonstrate pedagogic impact in relation to sabbaticals for research purposes.
- Over half of respondents agreed that sabbaticals should be awarded for teaching purposes.

## Detailed responses

Responses to the questions are listed either in tabular or text form below. A number of the questions asked for additional comments. Many respondents generously included quite lengthy observations. A selection is included below.

### Question 1: Status of respondent

Please indicate whether you are a		
Options	Response percent	Response count
Lecturer	13.6%	3
Senior Lecturer	27.3%	6
Principal Lecturer	22.7%	5
Research Fellow	0.0%	0
Reader	4.5%	1
Professor	27.3%	6
Other (please specify):	4.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		0

  

Other	
1	Manager

### Question 2: Category of university

Responses to the second question established that 71.4% (15) identified their university as post-1992 and 28.6% (6) as pre-1992.

### Question 3: University location

The third question sought to establish the location within a geographical region of the university. This question showed a single response from Wales and separately from South West England. Later questions amalgamated Wales and South West England as a single region.

Where is your university?

Options	Response percent	Response count
Northern England	4.5%	1
Midlands/East Anglia	31.8%	7
London/SE England	45.5%	10
SW England	4.5%	1
Wales	4.5%	1
Scotland	9.1%	2
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		0

#### Question 4: Entry in 2008 Research Assessment Exercise

The fourth question asked whether the respondent's law school had entered the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) as a separate unit of assessment or as part of another unit.

86.4% (19) answered in the affirmative, and 13.6% (3) answered in the negative.

#### Question 5: Inclusion in RAE entry

The fifth question read, 'If you answered 'Yes' to question 4, were you included in the entry?' 63.2% (12) answered 'yes' and 36.8% (7) answered 'no'.

#### Question 6: Award of a sabbatical

The answers to question six established that 45.5% (10) had been awarded a sabbatical from their current university, whereas 54.5% (12) had not.

#### Question 7: When did sabbatical(s) take place?

When did your sabbatical(s) take place? Please select all years which apply.		
Options	Response percent	Response count
2008-09	44.4%	4
2007-08	0.0%	0
2006-07	11.1%	1
2005-06	11.1%	1
2004-05	0.0%	0
2003-04	11.1%	1
2002-03	11.1%	1
If your sabbatical(s) took place in 2001 or earlier, please specify in which year(s):	44.4%	4
<i>answered question</i>		9
<i>skipped question</i>		13

Two further respondents confirmed that they were due to take sabbaticals in the future, one in January 2010 and the other in 2010-11.

### Question 8: Purpose of sabbatical

We are interested in discovering the purpose of the sabbatical(s) which you were awarded. Please specify if any of the sabbaticals were awarded for the following purpose(s), selecting all which apply:

Options	Response percent	Response count
Conducting scholarly research	100.0%	10
Engaging in the preparation of teaching materials or other work related to teaching	0.0%	0
Taking a recognised course of academic or professional study	0.0%	0
Undergoing a finite period of secondment to work in another institution	0.0%	0
Other (please specify):	10.0%	1
<i>answered question</i>		10
<i>skipped question</i>		12

One respondent identified ‘other’ purposes, citing ‘visiting a colleague with similar academic interests in Australia’ (Senior Lecturer, male, post-1992, Scotland).

### Question 9: Outcomes of teaching-related sabbaticals

Although question 9 produced one response (Lecturer, male, post-1992, Scotland), the respondent stated that, ‘There was no pedagogic aspect, purely research orientated.’

If any of your sabbatical(s) were awarded for engaging in the preparation of teaching materials or other work related to teaching, please provide details, including any specific funding (external or internal) and the outcome of the sabbatical(s).

Answer Options	Response Count
	1
<i>answered question</i>	1
<i>skipped question</i>	21

Number	Response Date	Response Text
1	Nov 3, 2009 6:38 PM	

### Question 10: Impact of sabbatical on teaching or the curriculum

Do you consider that your sabbatical(s) had a definable impact on teaching or on the curriculum more generally?

Options	Response percent	Response count
Yes	50.0%	5
No	50.0%	5
If Yes, please provide details:		6
<i>answered question</i>		10



The responses to this question produced an even split between positive and negative answers. The comments revealed a number of negative as well as positive views, despite the wording of the request for details.

A positive effect on teaching was noted as follows:

- *One of the courses that I teach relates specifically to contemporary issues in law, in the years following my sabbaticals (or term where I had a partial sabbatical) the content of my part of the module was changed so as to allow me to concentrate on the results of my sabbatical. (Professor, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*
- *Though I don't start my sabbatical until January, I expect it will [have an impact on teaching] because my research is related directly to two of the modules that I teach so that my findings will be making their way into a couple of lectures, but it would only be a couple of sentences here and there rather than a whole lecture discussing the findings. (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

One respondent was frustrated by the extent to which the research demands of the university may frustrate any impact of the sabbatical on teaching:

*I am not due to take my sabbatical until the academic year 2010-11. It is difficult to see how it would have any definable impact on teaching or on the curriculum because I will not be able to spend any time developing my courses (much as I would like to do so) if I am to meet the number of research outputs that my institution expects of me at the end of the sabbatical year. Of course, investing time in research should have some impact on teaching, albeit limited and indirect, in a research-led teaching environment. However, it is my view that universities are still struggling to give any real substance to the idea of research-led teaching, beyond meaning that an institution's primary focus is research, and its secondary focus is teaching. (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Wales and South West England)*

Another respondent observed that, although the sabbatical did not have a definable impact on teaching, it was 'a boost to morale to work at developing research whilst usually having a significant teaching load' (Senior Lecturer, male, post-1992, Scotland).

### Question 11: Should sabbaticals be awarded for teaching?

This question was central to the research, in eliciting the views of the respondent as to whether sabbaticals should be available for teaching purposes. Nearly 60% (11) of the respondents thought that it should.

In your view should your university law department offer sabbaticals to academic staff where the purpose includes engaging in the preparation of teaching materials or other work related to teaching?		
Options	Response percent	Response count
Yes	57.9%	11
No	42.1%	8
Any additional comments:		8
	<i>answered question</i>	19
	<i>skipped question</i>	3

Two of the views of respondents who answered ‘Yes’ illustrate the complexities of this point:

- I have mentioned this to my Head of School previously but I was, unsurprisingly, told that it would be impossible to budget for this. If universities are to demonstrate a real commitment to delivering quality learning and teaching experiences (as increasingly they must), then staff must be allowed adequate time to develop pedagogically informed courses. For research active individuals, this is impossible to achieve alongside delivering teaching and research outputs. ...There is simply no space currently built into the academic calendar for the development of teaching. In that sense, academics who are expected to deliver both excellence in research and teaching are currently being asked to perform a near impossible task. Sabbaticals for teaching purposes would be extremely useful. However, it is clear that things need to change at a fundamental level before they can be feasible. For as long as HE funding is strongly tied to research outputs of a certain quantity and quality, it will be very difficult for individual institutions to initiate a shift of culture that would facilitate a genuinely balanced approach to research and teaching. (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Wales and South West England)*
- Although quite often the label of any period [of leave] is important, where it is a ‘Research Sabbatical’ or ‘Research Leave’ then it is perhaps intrinsically difficult to see how the preparation of teaching materials etc. will fit within the criteria (save for pedagogic research). Where it is called ‘Sabbatical’ or other equivalent label, then it may be easier to justify. I think this is an institutional issue in the HE sector where the old labels are still more common. The increase in distance learning, blended learning and virtual learning means there is an increased need to prepare high quality materials further in advance and leave to do this should be given. (Professor, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

Other respondents disagreed:

- *In my opinion, there is adequate time in the normal course of the academic year for teaching preparation and other work related to teaching. While new modules/programmes are being developed, this is factored in to our staff workloads. All staff are given time in each and every academic year for ‘scholarship’ related to learning and teaching. The need for sabbaticals is more specifically directed at the ‘research’ aspect of the academic job - because in the ordinary course of the academic year there is not time to devote time to a sustained period of in-depth academic research. (Lecturer, female, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*
- *As teaching is the bread and butter of academic work, I have reservations about affording staff paid leave to undertake tasks they should ordinarily be doing as a matter of course if this is the sole purpose of the sabbatical. Research is something which is often put on hold because of time constraints, hence why this should be the key focus for sabbatical awards. If the sabbatical is for work on a research project, which incorporates teaching related objectives within a broader remit, I do not have a problem with this. (Senior Lecturer, male, post-1992, North)*

One respondent did not agree with the award of sabbaticals at all and queried the assumption behind the question:

*I don’t believe universities should award sabbaticals for any purpose. Asking this question without asking whether respondents agree with sabbaticals in general may produce slightly unreliable data. (Senior Lecturer, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

## Question 12: Rejections of sabbatical requests

While working at your current institution have you made a sabbatical request which was rejected?		
Options	Response percent	Response count
Yes	9.1%	2
No	90.9%	20
	<i>answered question</i>	22
	<i>skipped question</i>	0

Only two respondents (9.1%) had had sabbatical applications rejected.

### Question 13: Grounds of rejection

If you answered Yes in question 12, was one of the grounds of rejection that the requested sabbatical was for the purpose of engaging in the preparation of teaching materials or other work related to teaching?		
Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	0.0%	0
No	100.0%	3
Any additional comments:		2
	<i>answered question</i>	3
	<i>skipped question</i>	19

None of applications rejected were for teaching-related purposes.

### Question 14: Should sabbatical recipients be required to demonstrate impact of sabbatical on teaching?

Question 14 was a particularly significant question in that it sought to establish whether the respondent agreed with the premise that the recipients of sabbaticals should be required to demonstrate the impact of the sabbatical on teaching of the curriculum. 35% (7) agreed, whereas 65% (13) disagreed. The number of additional comments (10) illustrates the strength of feeling of the respondents, all of whom had answered 'No', apart from one (Female, post-1992) who answered 'Depends'.

Interestingly, none of the respondents who answered 'Yes' commented further.

There is currently considerable academic debate about the relationship between research and teaching. It has been suggested that in the case of sabbaticals awarded for research purposes the recipient should be required to demonstrate the impact of the outcome of the sabbatical on teaching and/or the curriculum. Do you agree with such a proposal?		
Options	Response percent	Response count
Yes	35.0%	7
No.	65.0%	13
Additional comments:		10
	<i>answered question</i>	20
	<i>skipped question</i>	2

Respondents disagreed for a range of reason. Several were concerned about adding a bureaucratically imposed requirement to academic practice:

- *I would object to placing restrictions on the kind of impacts from research or teaching, and most especially in terms of forcing any activity in a frame where it is perhaps not suited. I would, however, encourage colleagues, to consider whether there may be downstream benefits to the curriculum*

*from their research. (Professor, male, post-1992, London and South East England)*

- *High quality, internationally recognised research carried out by academics within a law school 'always' has a beneficial impact on teaching and on the curriculum. There is no need to 'demonstrate' this above and beyond the usual reporting requirements after research leave. The increasing emphasis in HE in being able to measure, quantify and demonstrate 'impact' takes away from the business of doing research and scholarship. (Lecturer, female, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*
- *I agree that there is and should be a link between research activity and teaching in that teaching should be research-led. However, I do not think it is necessarily always possible to demonstrate that future impact in a sabbatical application. This link between research and teaching should be organic rather than forced and there may well be valuable research projects that I would like to engage in that have nothing to do with what I teach and therefore I would be unable to demonstrate such a direct impact. (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*
- *I am against prescriptive rules. I think the overall test ought to be the well roundedness of the academic and general fairness in giving these opportunities. (Senior Lecturer, male, post-1992, Scotland)*

A related view expressed concern over an artificially imposed nexus between research and teaching:

- *I don't think that research is always directly related to teaching in the way that the question implies. Given that I think that sabbaticals for research are very important, I don't think they should be restricted by the need to demonstrate impact on teaching (or any other impact, for that matter). (Professor, female, pre-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*
- *I think the teaching-research nexus has, to an extent, been a sleight of hand. In many institutions the curricula can only cover a very small range of subjects and an even more limited range of topics within each subject...A considerable amount of academic research will be on specialist areas that will not fit within the curricula, so should that be stopped so that only research that fits neatly into the undergraduate (or limited postgraduate) market is granted? I believe many managers like using the teaching-research nexus as a way of appeasing staff and for use in prospectuses etc. However, it is quite possible to both teach and research in different areas without there being a clear need to bring the two together, especially where a person is conducting research in an area that is unlikely to have significant interest in a taught context. There is a need to allow for sabbaticals/leave to allow people to develop teaching*

*materials/teaching styles/engage in personal development but I think the idea of a link should be resisted.* (Professor, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)

One respondent was particularly concerned about overloading hard-pressed academics:

- *I do not think this would be appropriate at present. This is because...the quantity and quality of research that we are currently expected to produce makes it very difficult to find time for the development of quality teaching and learning programmes as well. To increase teaching related obligations without first reducing expectations would put academic staff under considerable stress. However, I would be in favour of moderating research expectations for the purpose of making room for the development of teaching expertise.* (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Wales and South West England)

#### Question 15: Age of respondents

This question covered the age ranges of the 22 respondents. There were no respondents under 30, 27.3% (6) were between 30 and 39, 22.7% (5) between 40 and 49, 40.9% (9) between 50 and 59, and 9.1% (2) were over 60 years.

#### Question 16: Gender of respondents

This question covered the gender of the respondents. There were 41% (9) males and 59% (13) females out of 22.

#### Question 17: Any additional comments

This question invited respondents to make any additional comments about academic sabbaticals in their university or in university law schools generally. There were 12 responses. While most stressed the importance of sabbaticals in developing research and teaching, respondents expressed differing views, particularly about the commitment of their own university to the award of sabbaticals and on the benefits which might ensue from sabbaticals.

One respondent emphasised the vital importance of sabbaticals to the work of the academic:

- *Sabbaticals are an essential part of the academic job. Without them, sustained research becomes almost impossible to carry out. Sabbatical leave is eroded at our peril!* (Lecturer, female, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)

Another referred to the indirect benefits including teaching:

- *Sabbaticals are a necessary part of the research process, but also have important benefits in relation to employee stress, as well as teaching ‘spin-off’, and in simply renewing enthusiasm for one’s subject.* (Senior Lecturer, female, post-1992, South West England)

Only one respondent referred directly to the award of sabbaticals for teaching purposes:

- *I think my institution is progressive in that I am aware of some staff who have been given either a full or a partial sabbatical to develop courses and/or course material.* (Professor, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)

The opportunity to contribute to the life of the university and of the employee in a manner justifiable to the taxpayer was identified by another:

- *I believe in the importance of sabbaticals as long as it can be demonstrated that the work done during that period makes a contribution to the broader aims of the university, whether that be to research outcome, third stream activities or income generation, or the development of specific additions/modifications to the curriculum that could not be delivered during the course of a normal academic year. I view sabbaticals as (a) an opportunity to make a more concerted contribution to the life/trajectory of the University and the individual; while (b) ensuring that this contribution is justifiable in terms of the taxpayers who fund it. This would necessarily mean that a sabbatical policy could be different in a private university.* (Professor, male, post-1992, London and South East England)

Another respondent expressed concern that universities are becoming more reluctant to award sabbaticals:

- *It is my impression that sabbaticals as a matter of course, every 7 terms or so, are becoming less common. In my institution...sabbaticals have been replaced by a research fellowship scheme, which is competitive. I do not have the relevant figures to hand, but I guess part of the reason for the change was to restrict the number of sabbaticals granted.* (Professor, female, pre-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)

Negative perceptions of the university’s commitment to sabbaticals or of the benefits to be gained from sabbaticals were demonstrated in the following comments:

- *Experience of the conduct of sabbatical policy within my university leads me to the conclusion that the university is not genuinely interested in the positive impact of research published as a result of a sabbatical period on the quality of undergraduate teaching. The university is interested in showing a quantum of publication that it considers will increase the status*

*of the institution in the view of other academics and that will thereby make those who run the university feel important. The argument is that if the university's academics publish more, this will attract brighter students. Brighter students will also enhance the status of the university because they will produce better results, independent of the effects (if any) of teaching. It is rare that a research sabbatical actually produces material that feeds into undergraduate teaching in a significant way. (Principal Lecturer, female, post-1992, London and South East England)*

- *There is never any indication what, even in general terms, the sabbatical has contributed to the overall benefit of the Department/School. There is no visible accounting for the time, usually freed up by the colleagues' cover. (Principal Lecturer, female, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

### Question 18: Willingness to take part in follow-up interview

Question 18 provided a mechanism for respondents who were willing to take part in a follow-up interview.

Would you be willing to take part in a follow-up interview with the researchers? Again, anonymity is assured.		
Options	Response percent	Response count
Yes	68.2%	15
No.	31.8%	7
If yes, please enter your email address and/or name and telephone number here:		15
	<i>answered question</i>	22
	<i>skipped question</i>	0

## The interviews: themes from face to face discussions

A number of themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews:

- the perceived status of teaching
- dissemination of sabbatical experiences
- observations on pedagogic impact statements
- indirect benefits arising from sabbaticals
- sabbaticals and career development

Selected quotations from the interviewees' responses are set out below under these headings.

### The perceived status of teaching



Only one university indicated that sabbaticals for teaching purposes were available and that the university valued teaching as much as research, for example in promotions. He told us:

*There is a twin track approach. Teaching and learning are not mutually exclusive. You could get promotion on teaching or research. You could be non-research and get promoted. Now there is a teaching fellowship scheme. You could get the salary of a reader. (Professor, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

He added as a corollary that sabbaticals were available for both teaching and research:

*Twice a year you are asked to bid for sabbaticals. Anybody and any grade are allowed. Bids are based on research or teaching and learning - one or the other or both. They didn't want people only to have to do research in the [Research Excellence Framework]. Scholarship counts very much as a basis on which the sabbatical is given.*

Another lecturer pointed out however the practical difficulties of taking a sabbatical.

*It depends on the other jobs you have. I am [a] Programme leader...Last year I was considering applying for sabbatical and decided not to on the basis that the sabbatical would affect the subject run. I was reluctant to let that happen. Programme leadership is difficult to cover. In the end I did not make the application. (Senior Lecturer, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

We did not find any other example of institutions awarding sabbaticals for teaching purposes. Nonetheless, there was clear evidence in the interviews that space could be available within a research sabbatical for the important task of developing teaching. Our research uncovered evidence of innovative thinking on how massification is transforming the relationship between staff and students, requiring new ways of teaching. A professor in a pre-1992 Scottish university perceptively reflected:

*I do feel that people do not pay enough attention on how to teach. There is much valuable research about learning and they do not pay enough attention to it. This is particularly so in relation to IT- they make a simple podcast and think it is something but it is just a TV programme. I do not have a problem theoretically in granting a sabbatical to develop a portfolio of teaching but they have to justify this. It is not however impossible to justify.*

*A hobbyhorse of mine is that in the age of mass education we cannot have the relationship with our students that we had in the 1970s... We have to find new ways of interacting and using students to assess themselves – take more responsibility - I advocate more self and group assessment. The students need to take themselves seriously. We have the cream of the youth and we have to make it clear that universities are different from schools. Students can assess their own work very well.*

*What is the role of the teacher? It is in stimulating an up to date curriculum using the full range of technology that is available, to encourage students and motivate them teaching becomes more like a performance. Our work must be more directed. We should manage student learning, not simply teach the substance of a subject in class. Many colleagues do this already.*

*Once you have this system in place, it needs to be updated but it could be run with reduced staff effort and the students would get a better learning experience. This is better than persisting with eighteenth century methods of transmitting information. We could save staff resources but there are difficulties, so we may need to give people time to do this in sabbaticals. (Professor, male, pre-1992, Scotland)*

By contrast, other respondents were sceptical about the opportunities to combine teaching and research in a sabbatical:

*In fact it's completely the opposite because they've separated research and teaching. It means that in order to get the sabbatical, I had to guarantee a particular number of specific research outputs that were REF-able. I think they now allow you to apply for teaching sabbaticals, but you do that separately, through the school, but I'm not aware of anyone having had one or having applied for one. (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

This same lecturer, however, regretted such competing claims of teaching and research:

*I think this whole idea of separating the two is a bit insane. When I first came here it was all about research-led teaching. I think those two are, and should be, linked together, so you can't really separate them. So I think that whole thing is really a mistake. If someone's not research active but if they want to design a new module or do some innovative teaching, that needs some time. I think that should be due a sabbatical as well...I never had a sabbatical before so I don't really know, but I always had the impression that during a sabbatical you had some time to reflect and think about what you want to do next, finish projects and start new projects. I don't see why that can't be the same for teaching.*

Similar regret was expressed by another interviewee who told us that she was instructed not to have anything to do with teaching matters during her year long research sabbatical:

*I am really interested in improving legal education and taking responsibility for development in the department. I was told quite strongly that it would be a bit foolish to continue with this...I feel a bit frustrated although this is the right advice in the current climate what I would like really is for the climate to shift. (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Wales and South West England)*

## Dissemination of sabbatical experiences

A number of respondents stressed the desirability of making the progress and outcomes of sabbaticals public:

*We are trying to be more transparent than many universities. Now we expect that we have to tell people about what we are doing...We do [this] informally.*  
(Professor, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)

Another interviewee was particularly concerned that dissemination and transparency should involve students as well as staff:

*There should be greater transparency...I think it would be useful to students to know what people on sabbatical are doing, even if it is not in their teaching area. There was a colleague who was on sabbatical who set up a blog while he was away and this was open to students. Those sort of things help involve more people. There is no reason nowadays while people are away that they should not have some sort of reporting mechanism. It would increase interest and show what sorts of grants were available, for example. You could even provide information to the wider public...I think a sort of reflective requirement, separate from journal or book output, will be of interest to students in terms of conception of the research and the development of the idea and they can develop useful skills for example in preparing for project work and dissertations. They will look at the actual process and will feel more involved. There would be more understanding of what the university is which those working nine to five and students should know more about.* (Senior Lecturer, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)

## Observations on pedagogic impact statements

There was no consensus on whether it would be advisable to include a formal system of pedagogic impact statements in sabbatical applications. A professor in a pre-1992 Scottish university commented:

*I would not want [a sabbatical] too monitored. But I would have no problem if a recipient said I want to spend two months on research and one month on a teaching project, as long as there are criteria which are met and the plan is set out clearly. It would depend on the faculty having a Learning and Teaching policy at institutional level. Having to develop teaching is a good thing if it is fitted into a broader approach...On the research side the benefits of a sabbatical are obvious, there is a danger that the teaching impact of a sabbatical will be looked at cynically. We need long term plans that should include a more imaginative approach to teaching.* (Professor, male, pre-1992, Scotland)

A similar opposition to over-bureaucratization was evident also in the following response:

*I think there is value in having research for the sake of research. There's not necessarily a teaching outcome attached to everything. Especially in law...when you have to teach certain core modules, you don't have as much freedom to go off and do everything you want. There's only a limited number of core modules. Work on feminist legal method might not make it into a core module or there might not even be space for an optional module. So if I'm going off and researching feminist legal method, I really couldn't say that that's necessarily going to have a direct pedagogical impact on a particular module. I might be able to say that it would inform my teaching but that would be very vague and I'm not sure how I would be able to evidence that in the way that things now have to be evidenced in terms of output and direct impact. So I'd be really worried about that kind of a development. (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

This same interviewee, however, would see merit in including the impact on teaching in the Research Excellence Framework (REF):

*It's not going to happen at this university because of what they've done, but I think impact on teaching is important, of course. And teaching is a good proportion of what we do. I think both of those things are important. Teaching is important. Impact on REF is important, but so is the blue skies research as well – the 'Let's just see what will happen if I look at this'. It's really problematic when you have to have a predetermined outcome because it means that I don't have a month to sit down and try and read Foucault or Derrida or whatever fancy theorist I want to read that I've not yet read. I can't justify spending that time because I need to be using it to produce outputs.*

In the group interview we conducted the two professors (both male, post-1992, London and South East England) were united in expressing strong reservations about such an impact statement:

*Professor 1: I hate the idea. I decided on sabbaticals on the basis of the research proposal not the impact on teaching. There would be an erosion of academic freedom if we artificially tack on a few more boxes. I would be appalled. Sabbaticals are the last corner of academic freedom and that would be eroded.*

*Professor 2: I agree. How would you measure that? Teaching is a separate issue. The other issue is accountability. The impact may be indirect. We should not have to demonstrate an impact for a research sabbatical. There would be an impact, for example in supervising research students but it would be playing games to look for impact where there may not be actual evidence.*

*Professor 1: I agree. We should not put the sabbatical at risk. Universities are outdoing themselves as it is by falling in with government tunes. This has done huge damage, for example, to legal scholarship in international law.*

## Indirect benefits

Some interviewees indicated that a more fruitful way of seeing the research-teaching link in a sabbatical was to highlight indirect spin-offs:

*Research and teaching go together. You need to be absolutely engaged with your subject. I do not have any evidence that a period of refreshment and time to think has an effect on teaching but there ought to be a pay off in keeping teaching fresh since a job which is initially exciting may otherwise be routine. [Referring to his own move from research professor to Dean he added] I took the Dean's job in part because I feared if I carried on teaching I might become like a frightful old man blaming the students. You do benefit from a period of refreshment in sabbaticals. (Professor, male, pre-1992, Scotland)*

Asked to expand on what she perceived to be the link between teaching and research an interviewee responded:

*I just think that the more research that I do, the more that develops the depth of my teaching and the depth and breadth of materials that I have to draw on. I can see a very clear difference between when I started teaching, in the first year of my PhD, when I had no experience of anything. My teaching at that time was very narrow, one step ahead in the textbook. And now, eight years later, there's a massive difference in how I teach. I have a much broader context from the things that I've read from my research. That now feeds in to how I design lecture... So I'd be very reluctant to put on my form: 'I'm going to learn about this and this is going to produce a lecture' because I don't know yet whether it will or not. But I just think that by reading about a topic in more detail, by being able to interview people, it will produce some effect, but I think it probably will be quite indirect. (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

Another reflected on the relationship between research and the introduction of new modules:

*A sabbatical would develop teaching and broaden what I could offer, for example, a new optional module. It's a good thing to demonstrate benefit to teaching. There is a tension between research and teaching. Most of our optional modules have come from staff research, for example in Animal Law, Sports Law... I cannot think of any research I have undertaken which has not fed into my teaching. (Senior Lecturer, male, post-1992, North)*

## Sabbaticals and career development

A persistent theme was the importance of managing sabbaticals as part of the overall career development of the rounded academic who is expected to teach and to research:

*I would like all members to have research plans for three to five years monitored by the Head of Research, once or perhaps twice a year. Sabbaticals should be*

*part of that overall plan. We should have a plan so we can say so and so is off in a few years time. It is difficult to achieve, as not many people look that far ahead - maybe they do for one or two years but not three or four... My view is that we do not do enough to mentor and support academics' careers. Our approach is often - just get on with it. Sometimes this is successful, sometimes not... Young academics in particular need to have an idea that their career needs to be planned, there should be expectations on both sides. We need to manage careers more successfully. (Professor, male, pre-1992, Scotland)*

In another reference to the potential impact of the sabbatical on the career of the individual academic, an interviewee observed that mentoring was essential for both the development of both research and teaching:

*I think it's useful here that, for every research active person, we have a research mentor, which, generally speaking, is a senior person who looks after a more junior person. It is the same for teaching as well. When a junior member of staff joins, we try to give a personal mentor who would be experienced. (Professor, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

## Conclusion

The survey response was too small in number to make any statistically significant observations about distinctions based on region or whether the university was pre- or post-1992. We have, however, identified trends which could form the basis of a larger study. In particular, our findings based on the contributions of academics from two Scottish universities who kindly co-operated in our research did not reveal any significant regional dimension. It was outside the remit of this study to explore the effect of the different funding regime in Scotland.

The project did illuminate, however, some of the ways in which this small area of university life, the sabbatical, crystallises many of the aspirations and tensions of the legal academic in the twenty first century. A number of respondents expressed their enthusiasm for an integrated academic identity, in particular, by maintaining a vibrant connection between their teaching and research. On occasion this worked well:

*[The university] has got a well -rounded interest in teaching as well as research. That's one of the reasons I like it. Strategically, that's quite nice. It keeps the balance of research and teaching staff. (Professor, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

More disturbingly, however, there were those, particularly among the younger academics, who felt torn by the pressures to excel in both teaching and research. Two examples illustrate this point and indicate that it might be necessary to resist an overly mechanical pressure to achieve research outcomes:

*It is frustrating trying to juggle [teaching and research]. I feel I will never be excellent at either since it is impossible to be excellent at both. People like me are growing in numbers partly because of the PGCHE we have an interest in teaching. We are the first generation to feel the pressure of trying to excel in both. The management of the School are coming around to the idea that they need to invest in both. (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Wales and South West England)*

*When I first started teaching here, it was a fairly rough model. It just included teaching and marking and a bit of admin, but the expectation was that everyone would share out the admin jobs between us, so everyone would do one or two jobs each and you'd get fairly rough credits for teaching, and then it was all based on goodwill, that everyone pitches in. But now it's gone to such a formulaic, numeric approach, there's no goodwill anymore. So, to me, it seems like a model for a big business but we're a very small school. It seemed like what we did before worked but they wanted to centralise everything and have standardised systems across all the schools, so that they could see that a law academic does X and a chemistry academic does the same. (Lecturer, female pre-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

Our research revealed also that most institutions struggled to find ways of communicating research achievements, particularly in encouraging students in what Bradney (2003, p121) calls 'the concentration of curiosity'. For some respondents and interviewees it was vital to find concrete ways of disseminating both the process and outcomes of research, such as the use of blogs, webpages, seminars and discussion boards. They saw it as crucial that students should be encouraged to be active learners and appreciate the distinctive nature of the work of the academy. Where we found examples of good practice in this area they reflected the institution's general academic ethos which introduced undergraduates from the outset to the university as site of learning, embracing teaching and research in the Humboldtian sense. One indicator was the extent to which research professors were involved in teaching undergraduates:

*We don't have research only people - not just research staff or just teaching. All the professors teach on the LLB...We don't have research and non-teaching staff. It is a deliberate policy. (Professor, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)*

Some respondents generously shared with us their reflections on how sabbaticals could be utilised to broaden the curriculum and the generation of knowledge more generally, for example by encouraging interdisciplinary teams and by forging links with the wider community:

*As far as my research is concerned if I am planning a research project I make sure that a PhD studentship is attached to it. More generally, in all social science subjects, we will be pushed to work more collaboratively and this inter-disciplinarity is a good thing. Single disciplinarity is now far too narrow. We are coming together much more. The government will not fund the same number of departments. We need to work in a different way. It is difficult because there are contrary pressures from the [Research Excellence Framework] and the funding*

*councils. But it does raise the question of where to submit if there are subjects which run across departments. I see interdisciplinarity as the future. We are merging more and more into specialist units. This provides good value for money for the public...Academics are difficult people to persuade - they are bewilderingly ignorant about the industry they work in. They see themselves in the social sciences as lone scholars and independent people for whom the university is providing a congenial environment. They do not see themselves as a sector of the economy.* (Professor, male, pre-1992, Scotland)

This professor saw a positive benefit on the use of ‘impact on society’ as a criterion more generally for research:

*As I see it, the money that pays us is taxpayers’ money and the government has a right to have an input. There was a different approach for a brief period, say 50s and 60s, but that was a different period. I think all academics now have to be aware of their political and social responsibilities.*

There was some indication that there could be alternatives to sabbaticals. Suggestions centred on more collaborative approaches. One Senior Lecturer (male, post-1992, London and South East England) cited the use of residential writing weekend workshops where staff could ‘all get together’ and there was a ‘collective ideal’. Another (Senior Lecturer, male, post-1992, Midlands and East Anglia) saw the current sabbatical as ‘very much a model of the individual researcher’, which, as he saw it, was less appropriate for interdisciplinary projects. He thought that a shorter more flexible model of study leave might be more beneficial.

The continuing appeal of sabbaticals is aptly summarised in the following observation:

*It’s space to think and to get away from the normal work environment and get some networking done and think a bit differently about what you’re doing. The most important thing to me is that it’s time to finish off a project that’s been hanging around for a while, and time to start a new project, to put that initial work into something. Having space to do that is massive...it’s a really important part of the job. I’m really excited about every few years I get to apply to have some time off so that I get to work in another part of the world and do research that way and physically be somewhere else. I think it’s an amazing thing to do and [will] benefit my work.* (Lecturer, female, pre-1992, Midlands and East Anglia)

Although we found little appetite to write the obituary of the sabbatical, our investigations suggest that law schools are struggling to find alternative ways to maximise the use of academic time in the face of increasing expectations and cost cutting. The accompanying Sabbatical Guidance Notes draw on some practical suggestions from our respondents and interviewees, as well from legal academics nationally recognised as excellent teachers. We recommend their use as a possible way to



concretise aspirations to enhance research-based teaching and welcome comments and suggestions from colleagues.

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## Further reading: websites

<http://www.ukcle.ac.uk> : UKCLE homepage.

<http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/resources/research-teaching-nexus/link> : UKCLE's mini-site on linking teaching and research.

<http://resources.glos.ac.uk/ceal/resources/litreview.cfm> : for a generic bibliography see *Linking research and teaching: a selected bibliography*, compiled by Mick Healey.

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/rewardandrecog/Reward\\_and Recognition Interim.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/rewardandrecog/Reward_and_Recognition_Interim.pdf) : interim report by the Higher Education Academy and GENIE Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, University of Leicester, on *Reward and recognition of teaching in higher education* (2009).

## Appendix One

### Letter to Heads of Departments

Dear...

We are conducting research into the actual or potential impact of university sabbaticals on teaching, building on our study of Law School sabbaticals published in *Legal Studies*, December 2007. Further information on the project, which is funded by UKCLE, is available on their website at <http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/research/projects/spencer.html>.

The project aims to test the hypothesis that research sabbaticals currently give limited attention to pedagogical impact. Ten universities have been selected randomly to form a sample allowing for a geographical spread and a mix of pre- and post-1992 universities. Your university falls within our sample which is drawn from those universities which our research indicates do operate a sabbatical policy. If you do not, in fact, operate such a policy, we would be grateful if you would let us know, so that we can select another university for the survey.

We are writing to you to ask whether you would kindly agree to forward this e-mail to members of your department (i.e. to those employed on full time or fractional academic contracts). The link to our web-based questionnaire is available on [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=A6u\\_2fhjhU6ciN5BmHlxT\\_2bjA\\_3d\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=A6u_2fhjhU6ciN5BmHlxT_2bjA_3d_3d). The survey period for responses ends on Friday 27 November 2009.

The questionnaire would take up to fifteen minutes to complete. Participants will be guaranteed anonymity and universities will be referred to only by region and whether they were established before or after 1992. Our findings will be published on the UKCLE website. We would be delighted to send you a personal copy, if you wish.

We realise that this is a very busy time for you, but we would be most grateful if you would kindly agree to assist us in this research by forwarding the e-mail and completing the questionnaire yourself. We plan to telephone you over the next week to give you an opportunity to raise any questions you may have about the project.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

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