Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

**Study Leave (sabbatical) policy**

Clergy and licensed lay minsters are called to mission and ministry in the context in which they serve. They are called to grow in God themselves and to enable those amongst whom they minster to grow in God. They have a responsibility to teach and to preach the Gospel. Their flourishing, both in terms of their personal and professional well-being, and in terms of ministerial outcomes, is crucial for the outworking of this calling. To ensure, therefore, that it is nurtured, the Diocese offers periods of Study Leave which can stimulate fresh perspectives in ministry and renew a sense of vocation, health and wholeness. During these periods, it is expected that the minister will step back completely from their usual ministry or role.

This policy outlines the provision in this Diocese for periods of Study Leave.

**Who is eligible?**

Study Leave is offered to those whose ministry or employed role on behalf of the Diocese includes a clear element of teaching and preaching the Gospel. This includes clergy in stipendiary or self—supporting ministry, licensed lay minsters (including Readers, Church Army) and diocesan staff who fulfil this core criterion. (Diocesan staff should also refer to the separate diocesan staff policy for study leave.) Those with PTO are not normally included.

**What are the criteria for having a period of Study Leave?**

Those applying for Study Leave must usually have been ordained or licensed, or employed by the Diocese, for at least 7 years, and have normally been in their current post for at least 3 years. In addition, they will in most cases be at least 3 years from their intended date of retirement.

**How long is a period of Study Leave?**

There are two types of Study Leave:

* **Extended Study Leave**. This lasts for 12 weeks, and may normally be taken once every 10 years, subject to the approval of the diocesan bishop and the availability of a place.
* **Short Study Leave.** This lasts for 4 weeks, and may normally be taken once every 5 years subject to the approval of the diocesan bishop and the availability of a place. It will normally be at least 5 years since any previous Study Leave.

For pastoral and financial reasons, the Diocese limits Extended Study Leaves to 10 per annum and similarly for Short Study Leaves. Normally no more than two ministers will be allowed to be on Study Leave from the same deanery at the same time.

**What is the content of the Study Leave?**

Periods of Study Leave aim to promote 3 things:

1. **Rest and restoration**. This may include more time with friends and family, learning or developing a (new) hobby or skill or simply taking time to ‘be’. It is an opportunity for the minister to review their personal work/life balance. Discussing this with someone might be a helpful part of this aspect of the Study Leave. For those taking an Extended Study Leave, it may also include holiday (max 3 weeks in addition to the annual holiday allowance).
2. **Spiritual refreshment**. This may include a retreat, spiritual reading and journalling, or a pilgrimage. It is an opportunity for the minister to refresh their faith and reflect on their personal vocation and calling to ministry. It may be helpful for them to speak with a spiritual director during and/or after the study period to aid this reflection.
3. **Ministerial resourcing.** This will usually be a project exploring a topic to resource the minister’s ministry. The choice is vast! For example, it might be of a more theological nature – an aspect of church history or doctrine and its relevance today, or of a more practical, applied nature such as preaching, faith development, transforming church conflict, or managing change. It might be the study of a biblical theme, or a look at an aspect of mission such as rural ministry, ministry with young people, chaplaincy, pioneer ministry. It might include going on a course, theological reading, writing and reflection, visits to relevant places and conversations with practitioners.

It is expected that the minister will have a suitable supervisor for the Study Leave, who will encourage the minister in their thinking and reflections on their learning, recommend reading if appropriate, and support and hold them to what they agreed to do during the time.

**Is any funding available?**

The Diocese offers some limited funding for stipendiary clergy for an Extended Study Leave (currently £400) in addition to the annual CMD allowance. An itemised application on the usual CMD grant application form must be made for this. Grants are also available from other organisations and [details](http://www.cofesuffolk.org/uploads/External-Grants-list_2017.pdf) can be found on the diocesan website.

**What happens after the Study Leave?**

At the end of the Study Leave, the minister is asked to write a short (max 2 sides) report detailing what has been done, what has been learnt and how it has refreshed and resourced the minister personally and professionally, and whether anything has emerged which might benefit the wider Church. The report should be sent in to the Bishop, the Bishops’ Ministry Officer and the Director of Mission and Ministry. Diocesan Staff also send their report to the Diocesan Secretary. There is also a debriefing meeting with the Bishops’ Ministry Officer.

**How do I apply for a period of Study Leave?**

Those hoping to take a period of Study Leave should apply up to two years in advance using the appropriate Initial Application Form (that can be found here:) <https://www.cofesuffolk.org/well-being-and-support/study-leave-sabbaticals> or obtained from Revd Jeanette Gosney, Bishops’ Ministry Officer. The applicant will be asked to meet with the Bishops’ Ministry Officer for an initial discussion of their application. Applications will then be considered in January and July by the Bishops and archdeacons, and Diocesan Secretary where appropriate. Once the initial application has been approved, the minister will be told and should inform their PCC(s) and Rural Dean. Nearer the time of the Study Leave, the minister will be asked to complete a more detailed Final Proposal for their Study Leave, and may meet again with the Bishops’ Ministry Officer. Those in parochial ministry should ensure that the Rural Dean and Archdeacon are appraised of plans for pastoral and liturgical cover during their absence. Other clergy/ministers should discuss provision for their absence with the Bishop, and those employed by the DBF will need to ensure that any request complies with the DBF staff policy.

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