Understanding Staff Furlough Options

Table of Contents

What is a Furlough? ................................................................. 2
State and Federal Unemployment Considerations ..................................... 3
Furlough Options (Overview) .................................................................. 4
Furlough Options for Exempt (Salaried) Staff ........................................... 5
Furlough Options for Non-Exempt (including PAS Hourly Paid) Staff .......... 6
Questions? ....................................................................................... 7
A recent message to employees highlighted significant financial challenges facing the University as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have taken several steps over the last few weeks to save costs, including hiring freezes, reduction in senior leaders’ salaries, and cancellation of the merit program for fiscal year 2021. We very much hoped that we could have provided continued pay and benefits to all faculty and staff throughout the pandemic.

With regret, and after exhausting other alternatives for cost savings, we must temporarily furlough staff. The type and duration of these furloughs will vary based on the University’s operational needs during the pandemic.

We are committed to planning and implementing furloughs in a way that limits the impact on employees as much as possible, while meeting operational needs and the required personnel cost reductions. The following information provides details and examples to help managers and supervisors plan accordingly, with as much flexibility as possible.
What is a Furlough?

A furlough is a temporary, unpaid layoff from work or a reduction in the days or hours worked, with the expectation of returning the employee to regular employment or work schedule once business operations permit. In some instances, it can be applied as an alternate schedule, such as the employee being furloughed for one week per month or reducing the days worked in a week.

Short-term furloughs offer a way for us to provide longer-term employment for valued employees, by temporarily reducing costs so we can continue to operate in this time of financial crisis.

A few important things to note:

- Since the purpose of a furlough is to reduce costs during the pandemic, vacation and paid time off cannot be used to mitigate or cover furloughed time.
- Benefits will continue in accordance with Policy 354 Layoff and Recall.
- Employees cannot perform any work for the University while on furlough.
State and Federal Unemployment Considerations

Furloughed employees may qualify for unemployment in New York State (NYS) in many instances. Eligibility depends on a number of factors and is determined solely by New York State. Employees may visit the NYS Unemployment Insurance Assistance website to learn more and to apply.

NYS Unemployment Benefits have a maximum benefit of $504 per week for 26 weeks. The actual weekly amount is determined based on earnings and varies accordingly. This benefit has been extended by 13 weeks by the Federal Government for a total of 39 weeks.

Federal Covid-19 unemployment relief pay provides an additional $600 per week through the last full week of July 2020.

Combining these two amounts equates to a maximum of $1,104 per week, which is equivalent to $57,408 per year, or $27.60 per hour until the end of July 2020. This assumes entitlement to the maximum unemployment benefit amount.
Furlough Options (Overview)

A furlough offers flexibility in its application:

**Full Furlough**
- An extended period of time when the employee is not working.

**Partial Furlough**
- Alternate scheduling, such as working fewer days in a week or hours in a day.
- Blocks of time which can alternate but are taken in increments of less than a full pay period, such as one week of furlough per month.
- Schedules will be designated by the employee’s manager and will depend on operational needs.
Furlough Options for Exempt (Salaried) Staff

**Full Furlough**: No work for an extended period of time.

**Partial Furlough**: May reduce standard hours (full-time employees) and associated salary for a period of at least three months. Furlough time should be taken in week-long increments.

**Guidelines:**
- The work week is as defined in the HRMS Time and Labor system.
- The weeks an employee is not scheduled to work are not paid.
- May be used for up to six months.
- Employee may not use vacation or paid time off to cover the time.
- Benefits will continue in accordance with Policy 354 Layoff and Recall.
Furlough Options for Non-Exempt (including PAS Hourly Paid) Staff

**Full Furlough:** No work for an extended period of time.

**Partial Furlough:** May reduce standard hours—hours per day, number of days per week, or number of weeks worked. Hours can vary each week.

**Guidelines:**
- Allows for the most flexibility to reduce scheduled work hours.
- May implement based on weekly operational needs.
- May reduce number of hours worked per day, such as six hours per day instead of eight.
- May reduce number of days worked per week, such as Monday–Wednesday, instead of Monday–Friday. Or, Monday–Friday on week 1 and Monday–Wednesday on week 2.
- Work every other week.
- Employee is paid for hours worked only.
- May be used for up to six months.
- Employee may not use vacation or paid time off to cover the time not worked.
- Benefits will continue in accordance with [Policy 354 Layoff and Recall](#).
Questions?

If you have any questions about the above information or examples, please contact your supervisor or Human Resources Business Partner for assistance.