

Career Break Guidelines v3

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|-----------------|---|
| Version history |   |
| V1              | Previous guidelines to 2015                   |
| V2              | Updated guidelines 2018                       |
| V3              | Updated guidelines 2021                       |
|                 |   |
| Review date     | 2024 3 years unless legislative update needed |

## **CAREER BREAK GUIDELINES** **(A form of special leave without pay)**

The career break scheme enables staff to maintain career momentum whilst allowing the University to keep skilled and experienced staff who can return to work at a later date.

Career breaks are normally granted for the following reasons:

- Care and/or responsibility for children or other dependents
- Personal study, training or development (which is relevant to the employee's work at the University)
- Any other reason agreed with the University (eg overseas travel or voluntary work).

The leave is normally for a fixed period and is unpaid. Contact with the employee is maintained and participants usually work for short periods of time to keep their skills up to date. Career breaks are open to all employees.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

Members of staff may be eligible for a career break, provided they have:

- permanent status (full-time and part-time staff are eligible)
- satisfactory health
- completed two years length of service
- have a qualifying reason to take a career break. The decision on this will be at the discretion of the University and will normally be due to caring responsibilities.

### **LENGTH OF ABSENCE**

Subject to the needs of the University, members of staff may be allowed leave from six months to two years. They remain members of staff whilst on a career break and have a right to return when it ends. i.e. to be re-employed on terms and conditions no less favourable than at the commencement of the career break, but not necessarily the same job.

In order to meet the operational needs of the University the exact start and end dates of the career break must be specified and may need to reflect the operation of the academic calendar.

Career breaks may only be extended by negotiation with the University.

A returner from a career break must normally requalify by serving two years in post before applying for another career break.

## **EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION**

Career break periods will normally be deemed to count as continuous service for employment law reasons but will not count as qualifying service for the purposes of local occupational provisions in the contract of employment e.g. accrual of holiday entitlement, sick pay or incremental progression

## **PENSION**

Pension Scheme membership will continue if applicable but no contributions will be made and members should contact their pension provider regarding any death in service benefit.

## **NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS**

Members of staff are advised to seek advice from their local Contributions Agency about their liability for National Insurance contributions during a career break.

## **APPLICATION FOR A CAREER BREAK**

An application for a career break is made to the University through the Human Resources Office.

Applicants must give at least three months notice of their intention to take a career break and must also state the requested date of return.

## **CONTACT**

During the career break the University will maintain contact with the employee. This will normally be done by the employing area and the Personnel Office. The employee will receive :

- University magazines/publications
- items of interest
- items relating to a change in terms of service

Additionally, those on career breaks can be invited to attend Staff Development activities including seminars, presentations and training courses.

Staff may also be invited to attend social events.

## **WORK WHILST ON A CAREER BREAK**

*For the University*

During the career break staff will be encouraged to return to work for two weeks, in order to keep in touch and remain familiar with the University's work. These work sessions will be paid.

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### *Outside work*

A person on career break may take up short term temporary employment provided this is approved by the University. Providing that this work is not the primary reason for the career break, consent will not usually be withheld.

### **RESIGNATION**

If an employee decides to resign from his/her post during a career break, they must submit a written statement of resignation to their line manager in advance of the agreed return to work date and in accordance with their contractual notice period.

### **RETURNING TO WORK**

A date for return to work will need to be agreed at the outset as previously mentioned. Three months prior to this date the member of staff will need to confirm in writing that they will be coming back to work on the agreed date.

At this time the University will put in place arrangements for the return of the employee. The University will seek, as far as possible, to place an employee returning from a career break into their former post. Where this is not possible, the employee will be offered suitable employment on terms and conditions not less favourable. This will also include any re-training and confidence building measures as well as opportunities to refresh and update skills.

Line managers may find it useful at this time to discuss with the member of staff any changes to working practices which have occurred during the career break. This may also assist in identifying any training needs. It may also be useful at this stage to consider any flexible working arrangements which may assist the member of staff in the process of returning to work.

If an employee is prevented from returning to work on the date agreed due to events outside the employee's control, they must contact the Head of Department as soon as possible. The right to return to work may be extended beyond the notified date of return providing that the appropriate evidence to support the reason for the delay is submitted.

Where the employee fails to return on the agreed date and no alternative date has been agreed, the employee may lose the right to return to work.