

**Human Resources Policy Statement HRPS17****Career Break****1. Introduction**

The University is committed to supporting work-life balance and recognises that staff may wish to take a planned period of time off work on a full time basis to concentrate on alternative personal priorities and commitments such as family, study or travel.

By offering a career break the University can retain skilled and experienced staff and reduce the loss of investment in its workforce.

**2. Eligibility**

To be eligible to apply for a career break the employee must:

- Have three years' continuous service
- Be on a permanent core contract, either full or part time.
- Must not have taken a career break in the previous seven years

**3. Length of career break**

The career break will be for a period of up to one year. Only one career break (regardless of length) can be taken in any one seven year period.

**4. Making an application**

An employee should approach their line manager at least six months in advance of the proposed start of the career break providing the appropriate details such as the length of the break and the start date and finish date. In urgent situations a lesser notice period may be considered.

The line manager will discuss the proposal with their Dean/Director.

The decision to approve or reject the application will be based on sound objective reasons, such as:

- the operational impact on the School/Service
- the purpose of the career break fulfilling the intended purpose, as specified above
- the individual's performance
- whether the post can remain vacant
- whether the post must be backfilled and the viability of this

Where it is anticipated that the request will be turned down the line manager must consult their HR Business Partner or Advisor first.

If approval is given the line manager must inform HR who will write to the employee confirming the career break arrangements.

If approval is not given the line manager, in consultation with HR, will provide the employee with a written explanation as to why the request cannot be approved, and may include an alternative proposal.

## 5. Contractual Issues

- 5.1. **Continuity of Employment:** employment is regarded as continuing for the specified duration of the break and therefore continuity of service will be preserved.
- 5.2. **Contractual pay and benefits:** pay and benefits, such as statutory maternity, paternity, and adoption pay, occupational maternity and adoption pay, sick pay, annual leave, incremental progression and any other benefits will cease to accrue or apply.
- 5.3. **Pension contributions:** the employee will cease to be a member of the pension scheme during the career break and will not pay any contributions. If, however, the employee would like to continue to make full or half contributions during the career break s/he may do so by letting HR know.
- 5.4. The **following terms will continue to be binding** on the employee and the University:
  - Notice periods
  - Compliance with the Code of Conduct and all other rules and regulations
  - The University's disciplinary and grievance procedures
  - Obligation to be employed exclusively by the University – the employee must not undertake paid work while on a career break
- 5.5. **Return to post:** the employee's post will be temporarily filled (or the work temporarily covered) until the individual returns to his/her post on the specified date. This shall be on the same conditions that s/he left, taking account of any organisational changes (including any change of location) that may occur during the period of the career break.

## 6. Maintaining Contact

During a career break employees must continue to be contactable by telephone, email and postal address. This is so the employee can be notified of any important changes in the workplace, to their post or employment.

## 7. Return date

The employee will be expected to return on the date that was formally agreed at the time of application. An extension will not be given.

Should the employee wish to shorten a career break and return prior to the specified return date, s/he shall discuss this with the line manager as soon as possible. While reasonable effort will be made to accommodate such a change in plans, given the commitments and alternative arrangements made to cover the career break, this will not always be possible.

## 8. Resignation

If an employee chooses not to return to work, the contractual notice must be given.