



Career Break Scheme – Guidance and Procedure

This guidance sets out information for managers and staff regarding the University's Career Break Scheme. It includes details on who is eligible to make an application under the scheme and the factors that will be taken into account in deciding whether an application will be supported.

The guidance and procedure set out the arrangements which an employee should follow in making an application for a career break and how an application will be considered by the University. Where the guidance and procedure refer to a manager this covers line manager for professional service staff and Head of Discipline for academic staff.

Who is Eligible?

An employee must have a minimum of three years' continuous service with the University at the date of submission of their application to be eligible to apply for a career break. Casual work or assignments on the temporary staff bank do not count towards the three years' service. In exceptional circumstances, applications may be considered from employees who have less than three years' service. This will be at the discretion of the Director of People Services with recommendation from the PVC/PSD on a case by case basis.

There is no statutory or contractual entitlement to a career break, although the University will give due consideration to all requests from eligible staff.

The terms and conditions of an employee's right to work in the UK may not allow for a career break to be taken. If you are working at the University on a visa please contact the International Employment Officer before applying.

An employee can be considered for more than one career break during their employment with the University. A minimum of five years' continuous service following the completion of a previous career break will normally be required before a further application will be considered by the University.

How will an application be decided?

When considering an application for a career break, the following factors will be taken into account:

- The purpose and reasons for the career break;
- The period of absence requested;
- The employee's remaining length of employment contract (if applicable);
- The operational needs of the College or Service;
- The longer term plans of the College or Service, including any anticipated structural or staffing changes;
- The ability to cover the post on a temporary basis;





- Any additional costs arising from the temporary absence;
- The potential benefits to the discipline and the member of staff;
- The need to retain key skills, knowledge and experience to achieve the College or Service's business priorities;
- Issues of fairness and equality.

The list above is not exhaustive and other factors may be considered by the University where it considers they are material and relevant to the specific request.

A career break will not normally be granted to allow an employee to take up alternative employment or start their own business or consultancy.

Not every application will be approved and therefore an employee should not commit themselves to any plans prior to his/her application being approved in writing.

The granting of a career break and the duration of any break will be entirely at the University's discretion and the University's decision will be final. The granting of a previous career break does not mean that any further career break will be approved.

In some circumstances, a career break may not be the most appropriate arrangement for the individual or the University. Alternative arrangements such as study leave or leave of absence (for academic staff), annual leave, parental leave or a form of flexible working may be a better option. Individuals who are not sure which arrangement is most suitable for their circumstances should seek further advice from their HR Business Partner or HR Advisor.

Duration of a career break

A career break will normally last between three months and one year. In exceptional circumstances, a request for a longer period will be considered. This must be approved by the Director of Human Resources.

The start and end dates of any career break must be clearly defined and agreed by the University.

If you are on a fixed term contract you can apply for a career break but the end date must be the date of expiry of the fixed term contract or before. The career break cannot run beyond your current fixed term end date.

Requests for periods shorter than three months' duration will be considered under the University's [guidance for approval of unpaid leave](#).

Arrangements during a career break

The information below sets out what happens to an employee's benefits and contractual entitlements during a career break.

All career breaks will be considered as periods of unpaid leave.





An employee will continue to accrue continuous service during a career break, for the purposes of statutory employment rights, but the period of the career break will not count towards any service-related benefits e.g. occupational sick pay and University maternity provisions. For these purposes service before the career break will be aggregated with service after the career break.

During a career break an individual remains an employee of the University and will continue to be bound by the terms and conditions of their contract, including the duty of good faith and fidelity, the disciplinary procedure and policies on data protection and safeguarding intellectual property.

Salary progression

Incremental salary progression will be subject to working a minimum of 6 months in the preceding 1 August to 31 July.

Example 1

If you are on a career break from 30 June 2018 to 31 December 2018, you will not receive an increment in August 2018, but you will receive the increment when you return to work in January 2019 when you return to the payroll (as you have worked more than six months in the preceding 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018). You will also receive a further increment in August 2019, as you will have worked more than six months in the preceding 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019.

2017					2018											
A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Career break					

2019

Increment paid in January and August 2019

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1	2	3	4	5	6	7					

Example 2

If you are on a career break from 20 June 2018 to 28th February 2019 you will not receive an increment in August 2018, but you will receive the increment when you return to work in March 2019 when you return to the payroll (as you have worked more than six months in the preceding 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018). You will not receive an increment in August 2019 as you will not have worked six months in the preceding 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019.

2017					2018											
A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Career break						

2019

Increment paid on return in March but not in August

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
C Break		1	2	3	4	5					





Annual Leave

Before a career break

You are required to take the annual leave you have accrued up to the date you commence your career break, e.g. if you wish to commence your career break on 1 February, you should have taken 1/12th of your leave entitlement. You must discuss your leave arrangements with your manager and clarify and record the agreement made with them.

During a career break

An employee is not entitled to contractual annual leave or paid University closure days during a career break. An employee continues to accrue statutory annual leave at 28 days per year inclusive of bank holidays: Statutory annual leave must be taken during the career break and will not be paid.

Work during a career break

There is an expectation that no work will be undertaken during the career break.

If an employee wishes to take up any paid work during their career break (that they have not previously requested) they must obtain written consent from the Pro-Vice Chancellor of their College/Director of Service (in agreement with their HRBP on behalf of the Director of HR) **before** commencing any work.

Requests for unpaid work must also be communicated to the Pro-Vice Chancellor of their College/Director of Service (in agreement with their HRBP on behalf of the Director of HR), such requests will not be unreasonably refused.

Sick pay

During a career break

An employee may be entitled to statutory sick pay, subject to the usual qualifying conditions, but there is no entitlement to occupational sick pay. A career break is likely to affect eligibility and/or the amount of statutory sick pay to which an individual is entitled. For more information see the government web pages <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/overview>

National Insurance

It is the responsibility of the employee to check what impact any gaps in National Insurance contributions may have on their entitlement to state benefits and/or state pension.

University Property

All University property should be returned to your manager unless agreed in writing by the University.





Restructuring

If during a career break an employee's post is part of an area which is subject to restructuring they will be included in the communications and consultation in the same way as other employees in accordance with the University's restructuring and redundancy framework.

Maternity/Adoption/Shared Parental Leave

When on a Career Break

An employee may be entitled to statutory maternity/adoption/shared parental pay and University maternity (UMP)/adoption (UAP)/shared parental pay (USHPP), subject to the eligibility criteria and the qualifying conditions.

If an employee is on a career break and they meet all the eligibility criteria and qualifying conditions, following a discussion with the HR Business Partner/Advisor and manager, they may be permitted to end their career break early and immediately begin their maternity/adoption/shared parental leave. The career break will end. All other conditions of returning to work will need to be met.

A career break is likely to affect the amount of SMP/SAP, SHPP to which an individual is entitled, for more information see the government web pages <https://www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave/overview>

If an employee has any questions about entitlement to statutory and contractual during a career break, they are advised to speak to their HR contact prior to applying.

Applying for a Career break after family friendly leave

You can apply for a career break while you are on maternity/adoption/paternity/shared parental leave.

You will need to agree a start date for the career break at the end of your family friendly leave and you may need to curtail your family friendly leave in accordance with the appropriate notification requirements.

If you have received University maternity/adoption/paternity/shared parental pay, the University may reclaim from you all or part of the non-statutory element if you fail to return to work for at least 3 months following your career break (or an equivalent period of time if you reduce your hours). This excludes any non-working periods (e.g. KIT days, parental leave, vacation time for term time only workers).

Please see the University policy on overpayments for details on how the money would be repaid by you to the University.





Pension

The period of a career break will not count towards benefits in either the USS, ERRS or NHS pension schemes; membership of USS, ERSS and NHS will be suspended for the duration of the career break and the Death in Service and other benefits may be impacted for the duration of any career break.

No contributions from the employer will be paid. The employee can, upon return from their career break, investigate the possibility of making extra contributions by way of Additional Voluntary Contributions to mitigate some of the suspended benefits.

Employees considering applying for a career break are strongly advised to speak the Pensions team in HR to discuss how their individual circumstances will impact their pension scheme entitlements.

Benefits/Salary Exchange

Please check the FAQs if employees are part of any salary exchange scheme, e.g. pension, car parking, car scheme, cycle to work, etc.

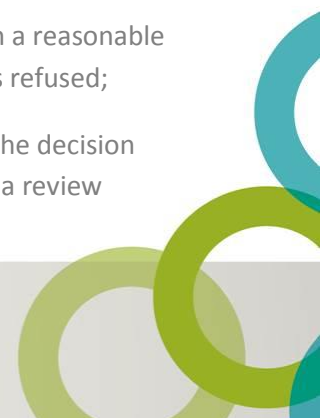
Vacancies

The employee can apply for any advertised role that arises during the career break, but if successful, they will be required to take up their duties in the new role when required, which may be before the end of the career break.

How do I apply for a career break?

The procedure for applying for a career break is as follows:

- ✓ The employee should discuss their request informally at the earliest opportunity with their manager;
- ✓ An application for a career break must be made a minimum of three months before the employee wishes a break to commence;
- ✓ An application should be made using the [form PD34 \(link\)](#);
- ✓ The application should be sent by the employee to their manager (and copy in the HRBP) in the first instance. Within the Colleges, an application must be approved by both the Head of Discipline and Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Within Professional Services, an application should be approved by both the line manager and Director of Service;
- ✓ If necessary a meeting may be held between the manager and employee to discuss the request (e.g. to discuss alternative dates for the career break);
- ✓ The employee will normally be informed of the outcome of their request within a reasonable time following receipt of your request. Reasons will be given where a request is refused;
- ✓ If the employee is not satisfied with the outcome, they can ask for a review of the decision made in writing within 14 days of being notified of the outcome. A request for a review





should be submitted in writing to the Director of Human Resources, setting out the grounds for the review;

- ✓ The initial decision will then be reviewed by another senior manager not involved in making the original decision. There will be no further right of appeal.

Keeping in touch during a career break

An employee on a career break should ensure their manager and HR services have up to date contact details for the duration of the break.

Employees are encouraged to maintain contact with their manager during the career break to help ensure that their return to work after the break is effectively managed. Before the start of a career break, the manager and employee should agree what kind of contact they will have, so there is a clear mutual understanding on issues such as whether the employee would like to be updated about changes happening at work and whether the individual would like to attend work for occasional days during their career break e.g. to attend a training opportunity.

Where the employee and their manager have agreed that it would be useful for the employee to attend training or other work-related events and meetings during the career break, the following arrangements will apply:

- Up to 10 keeping in touch days (pro rata) can be worked for the University during a career break;
- There are no restrictions on the type of work that can be undertaken on these days;
- For each day worked during the career break, the employee's actual return to work will be deferred by one day e.g. if a full time employee was due to return to work on 1 February and had completed 5 "keeping in touch" days, then for Payroll purposes the employee would be considered as returning on 1 February, but they would not physically return until one week later, 8 February.
- The member of staff must complete [PD25 \(link\)](#) and send the completed form to HR Services no later than two weeks before their return to work

Returning from a career break

Provided the terms of the career break scheme are met, the University will guarantee the employee the opportunity to return to work at the end of the career break. Wherever possible, an employee will return to their substantive post, unless otherwise agreed with their manager. Where this is not possible, the employee will be offered an alternative suitable role.

If an employee plans to return on the original date in the application it is good practice to make contact approximately four weeks before the end of the career break.

Where an employee wishes to return to their substantive role before the agreed end of their career break, the manager may agree this in exceptional circumstances and at their absolute discretion.





There is no entitlement to return to work early and the manager may require the employee to return to work on the date originally agreed.

Where the employee wishes to extend their career break, a request should be made as soon as possible, and wherever practicable, at least three months before the agreed return to work date. A request should be made using the form PD34 used to request their initial career break. The manager may agree this at their absolute discretion, provided the total length of the career break, including the extended period, does not exceed one year. Applications for extensions to career breaks where the length of the career break will exceed one year must be approved by the Director of Human Resources, in addition to the HoD/line manager and Director of Service/Pro-Vice-Chancellor. There is no guarantee an extension to the career break will be agreed and, therefore, the employee should not make any plans or arrangements until the extension is approved in writing.

A manager will normally arrange to contact an employee before their return from a career break to discuss and agree how best to integrate the employee back into the workplace.

If an employee wishes to change their working pattern on their return to work, an application must be made under the University's flexible working policy.

If an employee chooses to resign during a career break, he/she should submit their resignation in writing to their manager in accordance with their contractual notice period. Any part of the notice period that falls within the career break period will be unpaid. Please note if a period of paid parental leave fell before the career break you may be required to pay this back, see the Maternity/Adoption/Shared Parental pay/leave section in the table above.

[Further guidance available](#)

The following further guidance and links to useful information are available.

[Career Break Scheme Policy](#)

[Career Break FAQs](#)

[Flexible working](#)

[Study leave and Leave of Absence](#) (Education & Research staff only)

Please speak to your [HR Business Partner/Advisor](#) for anything further or to discuss your individual or team circumstances.

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